











PARIS



*THE THREE CITIES    LOURDES, ROME, PARIS*

# PARIS

BY

ÉMILE ZOLA

*TRANSLATED BY*

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VOLUME I

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## TRANSLATOR'S PREFACE

WITH the present work M. Zola completes the "Trilogy of the Three Cities," which he began with "Lourdes" and continued with "Rome"; and thus the adventures and experiences of Abbé Pierre Froment, the doubting Catholic priest who failed to find faith at the miraculous grotto by the Cave, and hope amidst the crumbling theocracy of the Vatican, are here brought to what, from M. Zola's point of view, is their logical conclusion. From the first pages of "Lourdes," many readers will have divined that Abbé Froment was bound to finish as he does, for, frankly, no other finish was possible from a writer of M. Zola's opinions.

Taking the Trilogy as a whole, one will find that it is essentially symbolical. Abbé Froment is Man, and his struggles are the struggles between Religion, as personified by the Roman Catholic Church, on the one hand, and Reason and Life on the other. In the Abbé's case the victory ultimately rests with the latter; and we may take it as being M. Zola's opinion that the same will eventually be the case with the great bulk of mankind. English writers are often accused of treating subjects from an insular point of view, and certainly there may be good ground for such a charge. But they are not the only writers guilty of the practice. The purview of French authors is often quite as limited: they regard French opinion as the only

good opinion, and judge the rest of the world by their own standard. In the present case, if we leave the world and mankind generally on one side, and apply M Zola's facts and theories to France alone, it will be found, I think, that he has made out a remarkably good case for himself. For it is certain that Catholicism, I may say Christianity, is fast crumbling in France. There may be revivals in certain limited circles, efforts of the greatest energy to prop up the tottering edifice by a "rallying" of believers to the democratic cause, and by a kindling of the most bitter anti-Semitic warfare; but all these revivals and efforts, although they are extremely well-advertised and create no little stir, produce very little impression on the bulk of the population. So far as France is concerned, the policy of Leo XIII seems to have come too late. The French masses regard Catholicism or Christianity, whichever one pleases, as a religion of death, — a religion which, taking its stand on the text "There shall always be poor among you," condemns them to toil and moil in poverty and distress their whole life long, with no other consolation than the promise of happiness in heaven. And, on the other hand, they see the ministers of the Deity, "whose kingdom is not of this world," supporting the wealthy and powerful, and striving to secure wealth and power for themselves. Charity exists, of course, but the masses declare that it is no remedy; they do not ask for doles, they ask for Justice. It is largely by reason of all this that Socialism and Anarchism have made such great strides in France of recent years. Robespierre, as will be remembered, once tried to suppress Christianity altogether, and for a time certainly there was a virtually general cessation of religious observ-

ances in France. But no such Reign of Terror prevails there to-day. Men are perfectly free to believe if they are inclined to do so; and yet never were there fewer religious marriages, fewer baptisms or smaller congregations in the French churches. I refer not merely to Paris and other large cities, but to the smaller towns, and even the little hamlets of many parts. Old village priests, men practising what they teach and possessed of the most loving, benevolent hearts, have told me with tears in their eyes of the growing infidelity of their parishioners.

I have been studying this matter for some years, and write without prejudice, merely setting down what I believe to be the truth. Of course we are all aware that the most stupendous efforts are being made by the Catholic clergy and zealous believers to bring about a revival of the faith, and certainly in some circles there has been a measure of success. But the reconversion of a nation is the most formidable of tasks; and, in my own opinion, as in M. Zola's, France as a whole is lost to the Christian religion. On this proposition, combined with a second one, namely, that even as France as a nation will be the first to discard Christianity, so she will be the first to promulgate a new faith based on reason, science and the teachings of life, is founded the whole argument of M. Zola's *Trilogy*.

Having thus dealt with the *Trilogy's* religious aspects, I would now speak of "*Paris*," its concluding volume. This is very different from "*Lourdes*" and "*Rome*." Whilst recounting the struggles and fate of Abbé Froment and his brother Guillaume, and entering largely into the problem of Capital and Labour, which problem has done so much to turn the masses

thus, in the course of his works, he could not do otherwise than drag the whole frightful mass of human villany and degradation into the full light of day. But if there are, again, black pages in "Paris," others, bright and comforting, will be found near them. And the book ends in no pessimist strain. Whatever may be thought of the writer's views on religion, most readers will, I imagine, agree with his opinion that, despite much social injustice, much crime, vice, cupidity and baseness, we are ever marching on to better things

In the making of the coming, though still far-away, era of truth and justice, Paris, he thinks, will play the leading part, for whatever the stains upon her, they are but surface-deep; her heart remains good and sound; she has genius and courage and energy and wit and fancy. She can be generous, too, when she chooses, and more than once her ideas have irradiated the world. Thus M. Zola hopes much from her, and who will gainsay him? Not I, who can apply to her the words which Byron addressed to the home of my own and M. Zola's forefathers —

"I loved her from my boyhood, she to me  
Was as a fairy city of the heart"

Thus I can but hope that Paris, where I learnt the little I know, where I struggled and found love and happiness, whose every woe and disaster and triumph I have shared for over thirty years, may, however dark the clouds that still pass over her, some day fully justify M. Zola's confidence, and bring to pass his splendid dream of perfect truth and perfect justice

E. A. V.



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# PARIS

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## BOOK I

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### I

#### THE PRIEST AND THE POOR

THAT morning, one towards the end of January, Abbé Pierre Froment, who had a mass to say at the Sacred Heart at Montmartre, was on the height, in front of the basilica, already at eight o'clock. And before going in he gazed for a moment upon the immensity of Paris spread out below him.

After two months of bitter cold, ice and snow, the city was steeped in a mournful, quivering thaw. From the far-spreading, leaden-hued heavens a thick mist fell like a mourning shroud. All the eastern portion of the city, the abodes of misery and toil, seemed submerged beneath ruddy steam, amid which the panting of workshops and factories could be divined, while westwards, towards the districts of wealth and enjoyment, the fog broke and lightened, becoming but a fine and motionless veil of vapour. The curved line of the horizon could scarcely be divined, the expanse of houses, which nothing bounded, appeared like a chaos of stone, studded with stagnant pools,

which filled the hollows with pale steam, whilst against them the summits of the edifices, the house-tops of the loftier streets, showed black like soot. It was a Paris of mystery, shrouded by clouds, buried as it were beneath the ashes of some disaster, already half-sunken in the suffering and the shame of that which its immensity concealed.

Thin and sombre in his flimsy cassock, Pierre was looking on when Abbé Rose, who seemed to have sheltered himself behind a pillar of the porch on purpose to watch for him, came forward: "Ah! it's you at last, my dear child," said he, "I have something to ask you."

He seemed embarrassed and anxious, and glanced round distrustfully to make sure that nobody was near. Then, as if the solitude thereabouts did not suffice to reassure him, he led Pierre some distance away, through the icy, biting wind, which he himself did not seem to feel. "This is the matter," he resumed, "I have been told that a poor fellow, a former house-painter, an old man of seventy, who naturally can work no more, is dying of hunger in a hovel in the Rue des Saules. So, my dear child, I thought of you. I thought you would consent to take him these three francs from me, so that he may at least have some bread to eat for a few days."

"But why don't you take him your alms yourself?"

At this Abbé Rose again grew anxious, and cast vague, frightened glances about him. "Oh, no, oh, no!" he said, "I can no longer do that after all the worries that have befallen me. You know that I am watched, and should get another scolding if I were

caught giving alms like this, scarcely knowing to whom I give them. It is true that I had to sell something to get these three francs. But, my dear child, render me this service, I pray you."

Pierre, with heart oppressed, stood contemplating the old priest, whose locks were quite white, whose full lips spoke of infinite kindliness, and whose eyes shone clear and childlike in his round and smiling face. And he bitterly recalled the story of that lover of the poor, the semi-disgrace into which he had fallen through the sublime candour of his charitable goodness. His little ground-floor of the Rue de Charonne, which he had turned into a refuge where he offered shelter to all the wretchedness of the streets, had ended by giving cause for scandal. His *naïveté* and innocence had been abused; and abominable things had gone on under his roof without his knowledge. Vice had turned the asylum into a meeting-place; and at last, one night, the police had descended upon it to arrest a young girl accused of infanticide. Greatly concerned by this scandal, the diocesan authorities had forced Abbé Rose to close his shelter, and had removed him from the church of Ste. Marguerite to that of St. Pierre of Montmartre, where he now again acted as curate. Truth to tell, it was not a disgrace but a removal to another spot. However, he had been scolded and was watched, as he said; and he was much ashamed of it, and very unhappy at being only able to give alms by stealth, much like some harebrained prodigal who blushes for his faults.

Pierre took the three francs. "I promise to execute

your commission, my friend, oh' with all my heart," he said.

"You will go after your mass, won't you? His name is Laveuve, he lives in the Rue des Saules in a house with a courtyard, just before reaching the Rue Marcadet. You are sure to find it. And if you want to be very kind you will tell me of your visit this evening at five o'clock, at the Madeleine, where I am going to hear Monseigneur Martha's address. He has been so good to me! Won't you also come to hear him?"

Pierre made an evasive gesture. Monseigneur Martha, Bishop of Persepolis and all powerful at the archiepiscopal palace, since, like the genial propagandist he was, he had been devoting himself to increasing the subscriptions for the basilica of the Sacred Heart, had indeed supported Abbé Rose; in fact, it was by his influence that the abbé had been kept in Paris, and placed once more at St. Pierre de Montmartre.

"I don't know if I shall be able to hear the address," said Pierre, "but in any case I will go there to meet you."

The north wind was blowing, and the gloomy cold penetrated both of them on that deserted summit amidst the fog which changed the vast city into a misty ocean. However, some footsteps were heard, and Abbé Rose, again mistrustful, saw a man go by, a tall and sturdy man, who wore clogs and was bare-headed, showing his thick and closely-cut white hair. "Is not that your brother?" asked the old priest.

Pierre had not stirred. "Yes, it is my brother

Guillaume," he quietly responded. "I have found him again since I have been coming occasionally to the Sacred Heart. He owns a house close by, where he has been living for more than twenty years, I think. When we meet we shake hands, but I have never even been to his house. Oh! all is quite dead between us, we have nothing more in common, we are parted by worlds."

Abbé Rose's tender smile again appeared, and he waved his hand as if to say that one must never despair of love. Guillaume Froment, a savant of lofty intelligence, a chemist who lived apart from others, like one who rebelled against the social system, was now a parishioner of the abbé's, and when the latter passed the house where Guillaume lived with his three sons—a house all alive with work—he must often have dreamt of leading him back to God.

"But, my dear child," he resumed, "I am keeping you here in this dark cold, and you are not warm. Go and say your mass. Till this evening, at the Madeleine." Then, in entreating fashion, after again making sure that none could hear them, he added, still with the air of a child at fault: "And not a word to anybody about my little commission—it would again be said that I don't know how to conduct myself."

Pierre watched the old priest as he went off towards the Rue Cartot, where he lived on a damp ground-floor, enlivened by a strip of garden. The veil of disaster, which was submerging Paris, now seemed to grow thicker under the gusts of the icy north wind.

And at last Pierre entered the basilica, his heart upset, overflowing with the bitterness stirred up by the recollection of Abbé Rose's story — that bankruptcy of charity, the frightful irony of a holy man punished for bestowing alms, and hiding himself that he might still continue to bestow them. Nothing could calm the smart of the wound reopened in Pierre's heart — neither the warm peacefulness into which he entered, nor the silent solemnity of the broad, deep fabric, whose new stonework was quite bare, without a single painting or any kind of decoration; the nave being still half-barred by the scaffoldings which blocked up the unfinished dome. At that early hour the masses of entreaty had already been said at several altars, under the grey light falling from the high and narrow windows, and the tapers of entreaty were burning in the depths of the apse. So Pierre made haste to go to the sacristy, there to assume his vestments in order that he might say his mass in the chapel of St. Vincent de Paul.

But the floodgates of memory had been opened, and he had no thought but for his distress whilst, in mechanical fashion, he performed the rites and made the customary gestures. Since his return from Rome three years previously, he had been living in the very worst anguish that can fall on man. At the outset, in order to recover his lost faith, he had essayed a first experiment: he had gone to Lourdes, there to seek the innocent belief of the child who kneels and prays, the primitive faith of young nations bending beneath the terror born of ignorance, but he had rebelled yet more than ever in presence of what he



had witnessed at Lourdes: that glorification of the absurd, that collapse of common sense; and was convinced that salvation, the peace of men and nations nowadays, could not lie in that puerile relinquishment of reason. And afterwards, again yielding to the need of loving whilst yet allowing reason, so hard to satisfy, her share in his intellect, he had staked his final peace on a second experiment, and had gone to Rome to see if Catholicism could there be renewed, could revert to the spirit of primitive Christianity and become the religion of the democracy, the faith which the modern world, upheaving and in danger of death, was awaiting in order to calm down and live. And he had found there naught but ruins, the rotted trunk of a tree that could never put forth another springtide, and he had heard there naught but the supreme rending of the old social edifice, near to its fall. Then it was, that, relapsing into boundless doubt, total negation, he had been recalled to Paris by Abbé Rose, in the name of their poor, and had returned thither that he might forget and immolate himself and believe in them — the poor — since they and their frightful sufferings alone remained certain. And then it was too, that for three years he came into contact with that collapse, that very bankruptcy of goodness itself: charity a derision, charity useless and flouted.

Those three years had been lived by Pierre amidst ever-growing torments, in which his whole being had ended by sinking. His faith was forever dead, dead, too, even his hope of utilising the faith of the multitudes for the general salvation. He denied

everything, he anticipated nothing but the final, inevitable catastrophe: revolt, massacre and conflagration, which would sweep away a guilty and condemned world. Unbelieving priest that he was, yet watching over the faith of others, honestly, chastely discharging his duties, full of haughty sadness at the thought that he had been unable to renounce his mind as he had renounced his flesh and his dream of being a saviour of the nations, he withal remained erect, full of fierce yet solitary grandeur. And this despairing, denying priest, who had dived to the bottom of nothingness, retained such a lofty and grave demeanour, perfumed by such pure kindness, that in his parish of Neuilly he had acquired the reputation of being a young saint, one beloved by Providence, whose prayers wrought miracles. He was but a personification of the rules of the Church; of the priest he retained only the gestures; he was like an empty sepulchre in which not even the ashes of hope remained; yet grief-stricken weeping women worshipped him and kissed his cassock; and it was a tortured mother whose infant was in danger of death, who had implored him to come and ask that infant's cure of Jesus, certain as she felt that Jesus would grant her the boon in that sanctuary of Montmartre where blazed the prodigy of His heart, all burning with love.

Clad in his vestments, Pierre had reached the chapel of St. Vincent de Paul. He there ascended the altar-step and began the mass; and when he turned round with hands spread out to bless the worshippers he showed his hollow cheeks, his gentle

mouth contracted by bitterness, his loving eyes darkened by suffering. He was no longer the young priest whose countenance had glowed with tender fever on the road to Lourdes, whose face had been illumined by apostolic fervour when he started for Rome. The two hereditary influences which were ever at strife within him—that of his father to whom he owed his impregnable, towering brow, that of his mother who had given him his love-thirsting lips, were still waging war, the whole human battle of sentiment and reason, in that now ravaged face of his, whither in moments of forgetfulness ascended all the chaos of internal suffering. The lips still confessed that unquenched thirst for love, self-bestowal and life, which he well thought he could nevermore content, whilst the solid brow, the citadel which made him suffer, obstinately refused to capitulate, whatever might be the assaults of error. But he stiffened himself, hid the horror of the void in which he struggled, and showed himself superb, making each gesture, repeating each word in sovereign fashion. And gazing at him through her tears, the mother who was there among the few kneeling women, the mother who awaited a supreme intercession from him, who thought him in communion with Jesus for the salvation of her child, beheld him radiant with angelic beauty like some messenger of the divine grace.

When, after the offertory, Pierre uncovered the chalice he felt contempt for himself. The shock had been too great, and he thought of those things in spite of all. What puerility there had been in his two experiments at Lourdes and Rome, the *naïveté* of a poor

distracted being, consumed by desire to love and believe. To have imagined that present-day science would in his person accommodate itself to the faith of the year One Thousand, and in particular to have foolishly believed that he, petty priest that he was, would be able to indoctrinate the Pope and prevail on him to become a saint and change the face of the world! It all filled him with shame, how people must have laughed at him! Then, too, his idea of a schism made him blush. He again beheld himself at Rome, dreaming of writing a book by which he would violently sever himself from Catholicism to preach the new religion of the democracies, the purified, human and living Gospel. But what ridiculous folly! A schism? He had known in Paris an abbé of great heart and mind who had attempted to bring about that famous, predicted, awaited schism. Ah! the poor man, the sad, the ludicrous labour in the midst of universal incredulity, the icy indifference of some, the mockery and the reviling of others! If Luther were to come to France in our days he would end, forgotten and dying of hunger, on a Batignolles fifth-floor. A schism cannot succeed among a people that no longer believes, that has ceased to take all interest in the Church, and sets its hope elsewhere. And it was all Catholicism, in fact all Christianity, that would be swept away, for, apart from certain moral maxims, the Gospel no longer supplied a possible code for society. And this conviction increased Pierre's torment on the days when his cassock weighed more heavily on his shoulders, when he ended by feeling contempt for himself at thus celebrating the divine

mystery of the mass, which for him had become but the formula of a dead religion.

Having half filled the chalice with wine from the vase, Pierre washed his hands and again perceived the mother with her face of ardent entreaty. Then he thought it was for her that, with the charitable leanings of a vow-bound man, he had remained a priest, a priest without belief, feeding the belief of others with the bread of illusion. But this heroic conduct, the haughty spirit of duty in which he imprisoned himself, was not practised by him without growing anguish. Did not elementary probity require that he should cast aside the cassock and return into the midst of men? At certain times the falsity of his position filled him with disgust for his useless heroism, and he asked himself if it were not cowardly and dangerous to leave the masses in superstition. Certainly the theory of a just and vigilant Providence, of a future paradise where all these sufferings of the world would receive compensation, had long seemed necessary to the wretchedness of mankind, but what a trap lay in it, what a pretext for the tyrannical grinding down of nations; and how far more virile it would be to undeceive the nations, however brutally, and give them courage to live the real life, even if it were in tears. If they were already turning aside from Christianity was not this because they needed a more human ideal, a religion of health and joy which should not be a religion of death? On the day when the idea of charity should crumble, Christianity would crumble also, for it was built upon the idea of divine charity correcting the

injustice of fate, and offering future rewards to those who might suffer in this life. And it was crumbling; for the poor no longer believed in it, but grew angry at the thought of that deceptive paradise, with the promise of which their patience had been beguiled so long, and demanded that their share of happiness should not always be put off until the morrow of death. A cry for justice arose from every lip, for justice upon this earth, justice for those who hunger and thirst, whom alms are weary of relieving after eighteen hundred years of Gospel teaching, and who still and ever lack bread to eat.

When Pierre, with his elbows on the altar, had emptied the chalice after breaking the sacred wafer, he felt himself sinking into yet greater distress. And so a third experiment was beginning for him, the supreme battle of justice against charity, in which his heart and his mind would struggle together in that great Paris, so full of terrible, unknown things. The need for the divine still battled within him against domineering intelligence. How among the masses would one ever be able to content the thirst for the mysterious? Leaving the *élite* on one side, would science suffice to pacify desire, lull suffering, and satisfy the dream? And what would become of himself in the bankruptcy of that same charity, which for three years had alone kept him erect by occupying his every hour, and giving him the illusion of self-devotion, of being useful to others? It seemed, all at once, as if the ground sank beneath him, and he heard nothing save the cry of the masses, silent so long, but now demanding justice, growling and threat-

ening to take their share, which was withheld from them by force and ruse. Nothing more, it seemed, could delay the inevitable catastrophe, the fratricidal class warfare that would sweep away the olden world, which was condemned to disappear beneath the mountain of its crimes. Every hour with frightful sadness he expected the collapse, Paris steeped in blood, Paris in flames. And his horror of all violence froze him; he knew not where to seek the new belief which might dissipate the peril. Fully conscious, though he was, that the social and religious problems are but one, and are alone in question in the dreadful daily labour of Paris, he was too deeply troubled himself, too far removed from ordinary things by his position as a priest, and too sorely rent by doubt and powerlessness to tell as yet where might be truth, and health, and life. Ah! to be healthy and to live, to content at last both heart and reason in the peace, the certain, simply honest labour, which man has come to accomplish upon this earth!

The mass was finished, and Pierre descended from the altar, when the weeping mother, near whom he passed, caught hold of a corner of the chasuble with her trembling hands, and kissed it with wild fervour, as one may kiss some relic of a saint from whom one expects salvation. She thanked him for the miracle which he must have accomplished, certain as she felt that she would find her child cured. And he was deeply stirred by that love, that ardent faith of hers, in spite of the sudden and yet keener distress which he felt at being in no wise the sovereign minister that she thought him, the minister able to obtain a respite

from Death. But he dismissed her consoled and strengthened, and it was with an ardent prayer that he entreated the unknown but conscious Power to succour the poor creature. Then, when he had divested himself in the sacristy, and found himself again out of doors before the basilica, lashed by the keen wintry wind, a mortal shiver came upon him, and froze him, while through the mist he looked to see if a whirlwind of anger and justice had not swept Paris away. that catastrophe which must some day destroy it, leaving under the leaden heavens only the pestilential quagmire of its ruins.

Pierre wished to fulfil Abbé Rose's commission immediately. He followed the Rue des Norvins, on the crest of Montmartre, and, reaching the Rue des Saules, descended by its steep slope, between mossy walls, to the other side of Paris. The three francs which he was holding in his cassock's pocket, filled him at once with gentle emotion and covert anger against the futility of charity. But as he gradually descended by the sharp declivities and interminable storeys of steps, the mournful nooks of misery which he espied took possession of him, and infinite pity wrung his heart. A whole new district was here being built alongside the broad thoroughfares opened since the great works of the Sacred Heart had begun. Lofty middle-class houses were already rising among ripped-up gardens and plots of vacant land, still edged with palings. And these houses with their substantial frontages, all new and white, lent a yet more sombre and leprous aspect to such of the old shaky buildings as remained, the low pot-houses with blood-



coloured walls, the *cités* of workmen's dwellings, those abodes of suffering with black, soiled buildings in which human cattle were piled. Under the low-hanging sky that day, the pavement, dented by heavily-laden carts, was covered with mud; the thaw soaked the walls with an icy dampness, whilst all the filth and destitution brought terrible sadness to the heart.

After going as far as the Rue Marcadet, Pierre retraced his steps; and in the Rue des Saules, certain that he was not mistaken, he entered the courtyard of a kind of barracks or hospital, encompassed by three irregular buildings. This court was a quagmire, where filth must have accumulated during the two months of terrible frost; and now all was melting, and an abominable stench arose. The buildings were half falling, the gaping vestibules looked like cellar holes, strips of paper streaked the cracked and filthy window-panes, and vile rags hung about like flags of death. Inside a shanty which served as the door-keeper's abode Pierre only saw an infirm man rolled up in a tattered strip of what had once been a horse-cloth.

"You have an old workman named Laveuve here," said the priest. "Which staircase is it, which floor?"

The man did not answer, but opened his anxious eyes, like a scared idiot. The door-keeper, no doubt, was in the neighbourhood. For a moment the priest waited; then seeing a little girl on the other side of the courtyard, he risked himself, crossed the quagmire on tip-toe, and asked "Do you know an old workman named Laveuve in the house, my child?"

The little girl, who only had a ragged gown of pink

cotton stuff about her meagre figure, stood there shivering, her hands covered with chilblains. She raised her delicate face, which looked pretty though nipped by the cold. "Laveuve," said she, "no, don't know, don't know." And with the unconscious gesture of a beggar child she put out one of her poor, numbed and disfigured hands. Then, when the priest had given her a little bit of silver, she began to prance through the mud like a joyful goat, singing the while in a shrill voice: "Don't know, don't know."

Pierre decided to follow her. She vanished into one of the gaping vestibules, and, in her rear, he climbed a dark and fetid staircase, whose steps were half-broken and so slippery, on account of the vegetable parings strewn over them, that he had to avail himself of the greasy rope by which the inmates hoisted themselves upwards. But every door was closed; he vainly knocked at several of them, and only elicited, at the last, a stifled growl, as though some despairing animal were confined within. Returning to the yard, he hesitated, then made his way to another staircase, where he was deafened by piercing cries, as of a child who is being butchered. He climbed on hearing this noise and at last found himself in front of an open room where an infant, who had been left alone, tied in his little chair, in order that he might not fall, was howling and howling without drawing breath. Then Pierre went down again, upset, frozen by the sight of so much destitution and abandonment.

But a woman was coming in, carrying three potatoes in her apron, and on being questioned by him she

gazed distrustfully at his cassock. "Laveuve, Laveuve? I can't say," she replied. "If the door-keeper were there, she might be able to tell you. There are five staircases, you see, and we don't all know each other. Besides, there are so many changes. Still try over there; at the far end."

The staircase at the back of the yard was yet more abominable than the others, its steps warped, its walls slimy, as if soaked with the sweat of anguish. At each successive floor the drain-sinks exhaled a pestilential stench, whilst from every lodging came moans, or a noise of quarrelling, or some frightful sign of misery. A door swung open, and a man appeared dragging a woman by the hair whilst three youngsters sobbed aloud. On the next floor, Pierre caught a glimpse of a room where a young girl in her teens, racked by coughing, was hastily carrying an infant to and fro to quiet it, in despair that all the milk of her breast should be exhausted. Then, in an adjoining lodging, came the poignant spectacle of three beings, half clad in shreds, apparently sexless and ageless, who, amidst the dire bareness of their room, were gluttonously eating from the same earthen pan some pottage which even dogs would have refused. They barely raised their heads to growl, and did not answer Pierre's questions.

He was about to go down again, when right atop of the stairs, at the entry of a passage, it occurred to him to make a last try by knocking at the door. It was opened by a woman whose uncombed hair was already getting grey, though she could not be more than forty, while her pale lips, and dim eyes set in a yellow coun-

tenance, expressed utter lassitude, the shrinking, the constant dread of one whom wretchedness has pitilessly assailed. The sight of Pierre's cassock disturbed her, and she stammered anxiously: "Come in, come in, Monsieur l'Abbé."

However, a man whom Pierre had not at first seen — a workman also of some forty years, tall, thin and bald, with scanty moustache and beard of a washed-out reddish hue — made an angry gesture — a threat as it were — to turn the priest out of doors. But he calmed himself, sat down near a rickety table and pretended to turn his back. And as there was also a child present — a fair-haired girl, eleven or twelve years old, with a long and gentle face and that intelligent and somewhat aged expression which great misery imparts to children — he called her to him, and held her between his knees, doubtless to keep her away from the man in the cassock.

Pierre — whose heart was oppressed by his reception, and who realised the utter destitution of this family by the sight of the bare, fireless room, and the distressed mournfulness of its three inmates — decided all the same to repeat his question: "Madame, do you know an old workman named Laveuve in the house?"

The woman — who now trembled at having admitted him, since it seemed to displease her man — timidly tried to arrange matters. "Laveuve, Laveuve? no, I don't. But Salvat, you hear? Do you know a Laveuve here?"

Salvat merely shrugged his shoulders, but the little girl could not keep her tongue still: "I say, mamma Théodore, it's p'raps the Philosopher."

"A former house-painter," continued Pierre, "an old man who is ill and past work."

Madame Théodore was at once enlightened. "In that case it's him, it's him. We call him the Philosopher, a nickname folks have given him in the neighbourhood. But there's nothing to prevent his real name from being Laveuve."

With one of his fists raised towards the ceiling, Salvat seemed to be protesting against the abomination of a world and a Providence that allowed old toilers to die of hunger just like broken-down beasts. However, he did not speak, but relapsed into the savage, heavy silence, the bitter meditation in which he had been plunged when the priest arrived. He was a journeyman engineer, and gazed obstinately at the table where lay his little leather tool-bag, bulging with something it contained — something, perhaps, which he had to take back to a work-shop. He might have been thinking of a long, enforced spell of idleness, of a vain search for any kind of work during the two previous months of that terrible winter. Or perhaps it was the coming bloody reprisals of the starvelings that occupied the fiery reverie which set his large, strange, vague blue eyes aglow. All at once he noticed that his daughter had taken up the tool-bag and was trying to open it to see what it might contain. At this he quivered and at last spoke, his voice kindly, yet bitter with sudden emotion, which made him turn pale. "Céline, you must leave that alone. I forbade you to touch my tools," said he, then taking the bag, he deposited it with great precaution against the wall behind him.

"And so, madame," asked Pierre, "this man Laveuve lives on this floor?"

Madame Théodore directed a timid, questioning glance at Salvat. She was not in favour of hustling priests when they took the trouble to call, for at times there was a little money to be got from them. And when she realised that Salvat, who had once more relapsed into his black reverie, left her free to act as she pleased, she at once tendered her services. "If Monsieur l'Abbé is agreeable, I will conduct him. It's just at the end of the passage. But one must know the way, for there are still some steps to climb."

Céline, finding a pastime in this visit, escaped from her father's knees and likewise accompanied the priest. And Salvat remained alone in that den of poverty and suffering, injustice and anger, without a fire, without bread, haunted by his burning dream, his eyes again fixed upon his bag, as if there, among his tools, he possessed the wherewithal to heal the ailing world.

It indeed proved necessary to climb a few more steps; and then, following Madame Théodore and Céline, Pierre found himself in a kind of narrow garret under the roof, a loft a few yards square, where one could not stand erect. There was no window, only a skylight, and as the snow still covered it one had to leave the door wide open in order that one might see. And the thaw was entering the place, the melting snow was falling drop by drop, and coming over the tiled floor. After long weeks of intense cold, dark dampness rained quivering over all. And there, lacking even a chair, even a plank, Laveuve lay in a cor-

ner on a little pile of filthy rags spread upon the bare tiles; he looked like some animal dying on a dung-heap.

"There!" said Céline in her sing-song voice, "there he is, that's the Philosopher!"

Madame Théodore had bent down to ascertain if he still lived. "Yes, he breathes; he's sleeping I think. Oh! if he only had something to eat every day, he would be well enough. But what would you have? He has nobody left him, and when one gets to seventy the best is to throw oneself into the river. In the house-painting line it often happens that a man has to give up working on ladders and scaffoldings at fifty. He at first found some work to do on the ground level. Then he was lucky enough to get a job as night watchman. But that's over, he's been turned away from everywhere, and, for two months now, he's been lying in this nook waiting to die. The landlord hasn't dared to fling him into the street as yet, though not for want of any inclination that way. We others sometimes bring him a little wine and a crust, of course, but when one has nothing oneself, how can one give to others?"

Pierre, terrified, gazed at that frightful remnant of humanity, that remnant into which fifty years of toil, misery and social injustice had turned a man. And he ended by distinguishing Laveuve's white, worn, sunken, deformed head. Here, on a human face, appeared all the ruin following upon hopeless labour. Laveuve's unkempt beard straggled over his features, suggesting an old horse that is no longer cropped; his toothless jaws were quite askew, his eyes were vitre-

ous, and his nose seemed to plunge into his mouth. But above all else one noticed his resemblance to some beast of burden, deformed by hard toil, lamed, worn to death, and now only good for the knackers.

"Ah! the poor fellow," muttered the shuddering priest. "And he is left to die of hunger, all alone, without any succour? And not a hospital, not an asylum has given him shelter?"

"Well," resumed Madame Théodore in her sad yet resigned voice, "the hospitals are built for the sick, and he isn't sick, he's simply finishing off, with his strength at an end. Besides he isn't always easy to deal with. People came again only lately to put him in an asylum, but he won't be shut up. And he speaks coarsely to those who question him, not to mention that he has the reputation of liking drink and talking badly about the gentle-folks. But, thank Heaven, he will now soon be delivered."

Pierre had leant forward on seeing Laveuve's eyes open, and he spoke to him tenderly, telling him that he had come from a friend with a little money to enable him to buy what he might most pressingly require. At first, on seeing Pierre's cassock, the old man had growled some coarse words; but, despite his extreme feebleness, he still retained the pert chaffing spirit of the Parisian artisan: "Well, then, I'll willingly drink a drop," he said distinctly, "and have a bit of bread with it, if there's the needful, for I've lost taste of both for a couple of days past."

Céline offered her services, and Madame Théodore sent her to fetch a loaf and a quart of wine with Abbé Rose's money. And in the interval she told Pierre



how Laveuve was at one moment to have entered the Asylum of the Invalids of Labour, a charitable enterprise whose lady patronesses were presided over by Baroness Duvillard. However, the usual regulation inquiries had doubtless led to such an unfavourable report that matters had gone no further.

"Baroness Duvillard! but I know her, and will go to see her to-day!" exclaimed Pierre, whose heart was bleeding. "It is impossible for a man to be left in such circumstances any longer."

Then, as Céline came back with the loaf and the wine, the three of them tried to make Laveuve more comfortable, raised him on his heap of rags, gave him to eat and to drink, and then left the remainder of the wine and the loaf—a large four-pound loaf—near him, recommending him to wait awhile before he finished the bread, as otherwise he might stifle.

"Monsieur l'Abbé ought to give me his address in case I should have any news to send him," said Madame Théodore when she again found herself at her door.

Pierre had no card with him, and so all three went into the room. But Salvat was no longer alone there. He stood talking in a low voice very quickly, and almost mouth to mouth, with a young fellow of twenty. The latter, who was slim and dark, with a sprouting beard and hair cut in brush fashion, had bright eyes, a straight nose and thin lips set in a pale and slightly freckled face, betokening great intelligence. With stern and stubborn brow, he stood shivering in his well-worn jacket.

"Monsieur l'Abbé wants to leave me his address for

the Philosopher's affair," gently explained Madame Théodore, annoyed to find another there with Salvat.

The two men had glanced at the priest and then looked at one another, each with terrible mien. And they suddenly ceased speaking in the bitter cold which fell from the ceiling. Then, again with infinite precaution, Salvat went to take his tool-bag from alongside the wall.

"So you are going down, you are again going to look for work?" asked Madame Théodore.

He did not answer, but merely made an angry gesture, as if to say that he would no longer have anything to do with work since work for so long a time had not cared to have anything to do with him.

"All the same," resumed the woman, "try to bring something back with you, for you know there's nothing. At what time will you be back?"

With another gesture he seemed to answer that he would come back when he could, perhaps never. And tears rising, despite all his efforts, to his vague, blue, glowing eyes he caught hold of his daughter Céline, kissed her violently, distractedly, and then went off, with his bag under his arm, followed by his young companion.

"Céline," resumed Madame Théodore, "give Monsieur l'Abbé your pencil, and, see, monsieur, seat yourself here, it will be better for writing."

Then, when Pierre had installed himself at the table, on the chair previously occupied by Salvat, she went on talking, seeking to excuse her man for his scanty politeness: "He hasn't a bad heart, but he's had so many worries in life that he has become a bit

cracked. It's like that young man whom you just saw here, Monsieur Victor Mathis. There's another for you, who isn't happy, a young man who was well brought up, who has a lot of learning, and whose mother, a widow, has only just got the wherewithal to buy bread. So one can understand it, can't one? It all upsets their heads, and they talk of blowing up everybody. For my part those are not my notions, but I forgive them, oh! willingly enough."

Perturbed, yet interested by all the mystery and vague horror which he could divine around him, Pierre made no haste to write his address, but lingered listening, as if inviting confidence.

"If you only knew, Monsieur l'Abbé, that poor Salvat was a forsaken child, without father or mother, and had to scour the roads and try every trade at first to get a living. Then afterwards he became a mechanician, and a very good workman, I assure you, very skilful and very painstaking. But he already had those ideas of his, and quarrelled with people, and tried to bring his mates over to his views; and so he was unable to stay anywhere. At last, when he was thirty, he was stupid enough to go to America with an inventor, who traded on him to such a point that after six years of it he came back ill and penniless. I must tell you that he had married my younger sister Léonie, and that she died before he went to America, leaving him little Céline, who was then only a year old. I was then living with my husband, Théodore Labitte, a mason; and it's not to brag that I say it, but however much I wore out my eyes with needle-work he used to beat me till he left me half-dead on

the floor. But he ended by deserting me and going off with a young woman of twenty, which, after all, caused me more pleasure than grief. And naturally when Salvat came back he sought me out and found me alone with his little Céline, whom he had left in my charge when he went away, and who called me mamma. And we've all three been living together since then ——"

She became somewhat embarrassed, and then, as if to show that she did not altogether lack some respectable family connections, she went on to say "For my part I've had no luck; but I've another sister, Hortense, who's married to a clerk, Monsieur Chrétiennot, and lives in a pretty lodging on the Boulevard Rochecouart. There were three of us born of my father's second marriage, — Hortense, who's the youngest, Léonie, who's dead, and myself, Pauline, the eldest. And of my father's first marriage I've still a brother Eugène Toussaint, who is ten years older than me and is an engineer like Salvat, and has been working ever since the war in the same establishment, the Grandidier factory, only a hundred steps away in the Rue Marcadet. The misfortune is that he had a stroke lately. As for me, my eyes are done for; I ruined them by working ten hours a day at fine needlework. And now I can no longer even try to mend anything without my eyes filling with water till I can't see at all. I've tried to find charwoman's work, but I can't get any; bad luck always follows us. And so we are in need of everything, we've nothing but black misery, two or three days sometimes going by without a bite, so that it's like the

chance life of a dog that feeds on what it can find. And with these last two months of bitter cold to freeze us, it's sometimes made us think that one morning we should never wake up again. But what would you have? I've never been happy, I was beaten to begin with, and now I'm done for, left in a corner, living on, I really don't know why."

Her voice had begun to tremble, her red eyes moistened, and Pierre could realise that she thus wept through life, a good enough woman but one who had no will, and was already blotted out, so to say, from existence.

"Oh! I don't complain of Salvat," she went on. "He's a good fellow; he only dreams of everybody's happiness, and he doesn't drink, and he works when he can. Only it's certain that he'd work more if he didn't busy himself with politics. One can't discuss things with comrades, and go to public meetings and be at the workshop at the same time. In that he's at fault, that's evident. But all the same he has good reason to complain, for one can't imagine such misfortunes as have pursued him. Everything has fallen on him, everything has beaten him down. Why, a saint even would have gone mad, so that one can understand that a poor beggar who has never had any luck should get quite wild. For the last two months he has only met one good heart, a learned gentleman who lives up yonder on the height, Monsieur Guillaume Froment, who has given him a little work, just something to enable us to have some soup now and then."

Much surprised by this mention of his brother,

Pierre wished to ask certain questions; but a singular feeling of uneasiness, in which fear and discretion mingled, checked his tongue. He looked at Céline, who stood before him, listening in silence with her grave, delicate air; and Madame Théodore, seeing him smile at the child, indulged in a final remark: "It's just the idea of that child," said she, "that throws Salvat out of his wits. He adores her, and he'd kill everybody if he could, when he sees her go supperless to bed. She's such a good girl, she was learning so nicely at the Communal School! But now she hasn't even a shift to go there in."

Pierre, who had at last written his address, slipped a five-franc piece into the little girl's hand, and, desirous as he was of curtailing any thanks, he hastily said: "You will know now where to find me if you need me for Laveuve. But I'm going to busy myself about him this very afternoon, and I really hope that he will be fetched away this evening."

Madame Théodore did not listen, but poured forth all possible blessings; whilst Céline, thunderstruck at seeing five francs in her hand, murmured. "Oh! that poor papa, who has gone to hunt for money! Shall I run after him to tell him that we've got enough for to-day?"

Then the priest, who was already in the passage, heard the woman answer. "Oh! he's far away if he's still walking. He'll p'raps come back right enough."

However, as Pierre, with buzzing head and grief-stricken heart, hastily escaped out of that frightful house of suffering, he perceived to his astonishment

Salvat and Victor Mathis standing erect in a corner of the filthy courtyard, where the stench was so pestilential. They had come downstairs, there to continue their interrupted colloquy. And again, they were talking in very low tones, and very quickly, mouth to mouth, absorbed in the violent thoughts which made their eyes flare. But they heard the priest's footsteps, recognised him, and suddenly becoming cold and calm, exchanged an energetic hand-shake without uttering another word. Victor went up towards Montmartre, whilst Salvat hesitated like a man who is consulting destiny. Then, as if trusting himself to stern chance, drawing up his thin figure, the figure of a weary, hungry toiler, he turned into the Rue Marcadet, and walked towards Paris, his tool-bag still under his arm.

For an instant Pierre felt a desire to run and call to him that his little girl wished him to go back again. But the same feeling of uneasiness as before came over the priest — a commingling of discretion and fear, a covert conviction that nothing could stay destiny. And he himself was no longer calm, no longer experienced the icy, despairing distress of the early morning. On finding himself again in the street, amidst the quivering fog, he felt the fever, the glow of charity which the sight of such frightful wretchedness had ignited, once more within him. No, no! such suffering was too much; he wished to struggle still, to save Laveuve and restore a little joy to all those poor folk. The new experiment presented itself with that city of Paris which he had seen shrouded as with ashes, so mysterious and so per-

turbing beneath the threat of inevitable justice. And he dreamed of a huge sun bringing health and fruitfulness, which would make of the huge city the fertile field where would sprout the better world of to-morrow.



## II

### WEALTH AND WORLDLINESS

THAT same morning, as was the case nearly every day, some intimates were expected to *déjeuner* at the Duvillards', a few friends who more or less invited themselves. And on that chilly day, all thaw and fog, the regal mansion in the Rue Godot-de-Mauroy near the Boulevard de la Madeleine bloomed with the rarest flowers, for flowers were the greatest passion of the Baroness, who transformed the lofty, sumptuous rooms, littered with marvels, into warm and odoriferous conservatories, whither the gloomy, livid light of Paris penetrated caressingly with infinite softness.

The great reception rooms were on the ground-floor looking on to the spacious courtyard, and preceded by a little winter garden, which served as a vestibule where two footmen in liveries of dark green and gold were invariably on duty. A famous gallery of paintings, valued at millions of francs, occupied the whole of the northern side of the house. And the grand staircase, of a sumptuousness which also was famous, conducted to the apartments usually occupied by the family, a large red drawing-room, a small blue and silver drawing-room, a study whose walls were hung with old stamped leather, and a dining-room in pale green with English furniture, not to mention the vari-

ous bedchambers and dressing-rooms. Built in the time of Louis XIV. the mansion retained an aspect of noble grandeur, subordinated to the epicurean tastes of the triumphant *bourgeoise*, which for a century now had reigned by virtue of the omnipotence of money.

Noon had not yet struck, and Baron Duvillard, contrary to custom, found himself the first in the little blue and silver *salon*. He was a man of sixty, tall and sturdy, with a large nose, full cheeks, broad, fleshy lips, and wolfish teeth, which had remained very fine. He had, however, become bald at an early age, and dyed the little hair that was left him. Moreover, since his beard had turned white, he had kept his face clean-shaven. His grey eyes bespoke his audacity, and in his laugh there was a ring of conquest, while the whole of his face expressed the fact that this conquest was his own, that he wielded the sovereignty of an unscrupulous master, who used and abused the power stolen and retained by his caste.

He took a few steps, and then halted in front of a basket of wonderful orchids near the window. On the mantel-piece and table tufts of violets sent forth their perfume, and in the warm, deep silence which seemed to fall from the hangings, the Baron sat down and stretched himself in one of the large armchairs, upholstered in blue satin striped with silver. He had taken a newspaper from his pocket, and began to re-peruse an article it contained, whilst all around him the entire mansion proclaimed his immense fortune, his sovereign power, the whole history of the century which had made him the master. His grandfather,

Jérôme Duvillard, son of a petty advocate of Poitou, had come to Paris as a notary's clerk in 1788, when he was eighteen, and very keen, intelligent and hungry as he was, he had gained the family's first three millions—at first in trafficking with the *émigrés'* estates when they were confiscated and sold as national property, and later, in contracting for supplies to the imperial army. His father, Grégoire Duvillard, born in 1805, and the real great man of the family—he who had first reigned in the Rue Godot-de-Mauroy, after King Louis Philippe had granted him the title of Baron—remained one of the recognized heroes of modern finance by reason of the scandalous profits which he had made in every famous thieving speculation of the July Monarchy and the Second Empire, such as mines, railroads, and the Suez Canal. And he, the present Baron, Henri by name, and born in 1836, had only seriously gone into business on Baron Grégoire's death soon after the Franco-German War. However, he had done so with such a ravenous appetite, that in a quarter of a century he had again doubled the family fortune. He rotted and devoured, corrupted, swallowed everything that he touched, and he was also the tempter personified—the man who bought all consciences that were for sale—having fully understood the new times and its tendencies in presence of the democracy, which in its turn had become hungry and impatient. Inferior though he was both to his father and his grandfather, being a man of enjoyment, caring less for the work of conquest than the division of the spoil, he nevertheless remained a terrible fellow, a sleek triumpher, whose operations

were all certainties, who amassed millions at each stroke, and treated with governments on a footing of equality, able as he was to place, if not France, at least a ministry in his pocket. In one century and three generations, royalty had become embodied in him: a royalty already threatened, already shaken by the tempest close ahead. And at times his figure grew and expanded till it became, as it were, an incarnation of the whole *bourgeoisie*—that *bourgeoisie* which at the division of the spoils in 1789 appropriated everything, and has since fattened on everything at the expense of the masses, and refuses to restore anything whatever.

The article which the Baron was re-perusing in a halfpenny newspaper interested him. "La Voix du Peuple" was a noisy sheet which, under the pretence of defending outraged justice and morality, set a fresh scandal circulating every morning in the hope of thereby increasing its sales. And that morning, in big type on its front page, this sub-title was displayed. "The Affair of the African Railways. Five Millions spent in Bribes. Two Ministers Bought, Thirty Deputies and Senators Compromised." Then in an article of odious violence the paper's editor, the famous Sagnier, announced that he possessed and intended to publish the list of the thirty-two members of Parliament, whose support Baron Duvillard had purchased at the time when the Chambers had voted the bill for the African Railway Lines. Quite a romantic story was mingled with all this, the adventures of a certain Hunter, whom the Baron had employed as his go-between and who had now fled. The Baron, however,

re-perused each sentence and weighed each word of the article very calmly; and although he was alone he shrugged his shoulders and spoke aloud with the tranquil assurance of a man whose responsibility is covered and who is, moreover, too powerful to be molested.

"The idiot," he said, "he knows even less than he pretends."

Just then, however, a first guest arrived, a man of barely four-and-thirty, elegantly dressed, dark and good looking, with a delicately shaped nose, and curly hair and beard. As a rule, too, he had laughing eyes, and something giddy, flighty, bird-like in his demeanour; but that morning he seemed nervous, anxious even, and smiled in a scared way.

"Ah! it's you, Duthil," said the Baron, rising. "Have you read this?" And he showed the new comer the "*Voix du Peuple*," which he was folding up to replace it in his pocket.

"Why yes, I've read it. It's amazing. How can Sagnier have got hold of the list of names? Has there been some traitor?"

The Baron looked at his companion quietly, amused by his secret anguish. Duthil, the son of a notary of Angoulême, almost poor and very honest, had been sent to Paris as deputy for that town whilst yet very young, thanks to the high reputation of his father; and he there led a life of pleasure and idleness, even as he had formerly done when a student. However, his pleasant bachelor's quarters in the Rue de Surresnes, and his success as a handsome man in the whirl of women among whom he lived, cost him no little

money; and gaily enough, devoid as he was of any moral sense, he had already glided into all sorts of compromising and lowering actions, like a light-headed, superior man, a charming, thoughtless fellow, who attached no importance whatever to such trifles.

“Bah!” said the Baron at last. “Has Sagnier even got a list? I doubt it, for there was none; Hunter wasn’t so foolish as to draw one up. And then, too, it was merely an ordinary affair; nothing more was done than is always done in such matters of business.”

Duthil, who for the first time in his life had felt anxious, listened like one that needs to be reassured. “Quite so, eh?” he exclaimed. “That’s what I thought. There isn’t a cat to be whipped in the whole affair.”

He tried to laugh as usual, and no longer exactly knew how it was that he had received some ten thousand francs in connection with the matter, whether it were in the shape of a vague loan, or else under some pretext of publicity, puffery, or advertising, for Hunter had acted with extreme adroitness so as to give no offence to the susceptibilities of even the least virginal consciences.

“No, there’s not a cat to be whipped,” repeated Duvillard, who decidedly seemed amused by the face which Duthil was pulling. “And besides, my dear fellow, it’s well known that cats always fall on their feet. But have you seen Silviane?”

“I just left her. I found her in a great rage with you. She learnt this morning that her affair of the *Comédie* is off.”

A rush of anger suddenly reddened the Baron’s

face He, who could scoff so calmly at the threat of the African Railways scandal, lost his balance and felt his blood boiling directly there was any question of Sylviane, the last, imperious passion of his sixtieth year. "What! off?" said he "But at the Ministry of Fine Arts they gave me almost a positive promise only the day before yesterday."

He referred to a stubborn caprice of Sylviane d'Aulnay, who, although she had hitherto only reaped a success of beauty on the stage, obstinately sought to enter the Comédie Française and make her *début* there in the part of "Pauline" in Corneille's "Polyeucte," which part she had been studying desperately for several months past. Her idea seemed an insane one, and all Paris laughed at it; but the young woman, with superb assurance, kept herself well to the front, and imperiously demanded the *rôle*, feeling sure that she would conquer

"It was the minister who wouldn't have it," explained Duthil.

The Baron was choking. "The minister, the minister! Ah! well, I will soon have that minister sent to the rightabout."

However, he had to cease speaking, for at that moment Baroness Duvillard came into the little drawing-room. At forty-six years of age she was still very beautiful. Very fair and tall, having hitherto put on but little superfluous fat, and retaining perfect arms and shoulders, with speckless silky skin, it was only her face that was spoiling, colouring slightly with reddish blotches. And these blemishes were her torment, her hourly thought and worry. Her Jewish origin

was revealed by her somewhat long and strangely charming face, with blue and softly voluptuous eyes. As indolent as an Oriental slave, disliking to have to move, walk, or even speak, she seemed intended for a harem life, especially as she was for ever tending her person. That day she was all in white, gowned in a white silk toilette of delicious and lustrous simplicity.

Duthil complimented her, and kissed her hand with an enraptured air. "Ah! madame, you set a little springtide in my heart. Paris is so black and muddy this morning."

However, a second guest entered the room, a tall and handsome man of five or six-and-thirty; and the Baron, still disturbed by his passion, profited by this opportunity to make his escape. He carried Duthil away into his study, saying, "Come here an instant, my dear fellow. I have a few more words to say to you about the affair in question. Monsieur de Qunsac will keep my wife company for a moment."

The Baroness, as soon as she was alone with the new comer, who, like Duthil, had most respectfully kissed her hand, gave him a long, silent look, while her soft eyes filled with tears. Deep silence, tinged with some slight embarrassment, had fallen, but she ended by saying in a very low voice: "How happy I am, Gérard, to find myself alone with you for a moment. For a month past I have not had that happiness."

The circumstances in which Henri Duvillard had married the younger daughter of Justus Steinberger, the great Jew banker, formed quite a story which was



often recalled. The Steinbergers — after the fashion of the Rothschilds — were originally four brothers — Justus, residing in Paris, and the three others at Berlin, Vienna, and London, a circumstance which gave their secret association most formidable power in the financial markets of Europe. Justus, however, was the least wealthy of the four, and in Baron Grégoire Duvillard he had a redoubtable adversary against whom he was compelled to struggle each time that any large prey was in question. And it was after a terrible encounter between the pair, after the eager sharing of the spoils, that the crafty idea had come to Justus of giving his younger daughter Eve in marriage, by way of *douceur*, to the Baron's son, Henri. So far the latter had only been known as an amiable fellow, fond of horses and club life; and no doubt Justus's idea was that, at the death of the redoubtable Baron, who was already condemned by his physicians, he would be able to lay his hands on the rival banking-house, particularly if he only had in front of him a son-in-law whom it was easy to conquer. As it happened, Henri had been mastered by a violent passion for Eve's blond beauty, which was then dazzling. He wished to marry her, and his father, who knew him, consented, in reality greatly amused to think that Justus was making an execrably bad stroke of business. The enterprise became indeed disastrous for Justus when Henri succeeded his father and the man of prey appeared from beneath the man of pleasure and carved himself his own huge share in exploiting the unbridled appetites of the middle-class democracy, which had at last secured possession of power. Not

only did Eve fail to devour Henri, who in his turn had become Baron Duvillard, the all-powerful banker, more and more master of the market; but it was the Baron who devoured Eve, and this in less than four years' time. After she had borne him a daughter and a son in turn, he suddenly drew away from her, neglected her, as if she were a mere toy that he no longer cared for. She was at first both surprised and distressed by the change, especially on learning that he was resuming his bachelor's habits, and had set his fickle if ardent affections elsewhere. Then, however, without any kind of recrimination, any display of anger, or even any particular effort to regain her ascendancy over him, she, on her side, imitated his example. She could not live without love, and assuredly she had only been born to be beautiful, to fascinate and reap adoration. To the lover whom she chose when she was five-and-twenty she remained faithful for more than fifteen years, as faithful as she might have been to a husband; and when he died her grief was intense, it was like real widowhood. Six months later, however, having met Count Gérard de Quinsac she had again been unable to resist her imperative need of adoration, and an intrigue had followed.

"Have you been ill, my dear Gérard?" she inquired, noticing the young man's embarrassment. "Are you hiding some worry from me?"

She was ten years older than he was; and she clung desperately to this last passion of hers, revolting at the thought of growing old, and resolved upon every effort to keep the young man beside her.

"No, I am hiding nothing, I assure you," replied

the Count. "But my mother has had much need of me recently."

She continued looking at him, however, with anxious passion, finding him so tall and aristocratic of mien, with his regular features and dark hair and moustaches which were always most carefully tended. He belonged to one of the oldest families of France, and resided on a ground-floor in the Rue St. Dominique with his widowed mother, who had been ruined by her adventurously inclined husband, and had at most an income of some fifteen thousand francs<sup>1</sup> to live upon. Gérard for his part had never done anything; contenting himself with his one year of obligatory military service, he had renounced the profession of arms in the same way as he had renounced that of diplomacy, the only one that offered him an opening of any dignity. He spent his days in that busy idleness common to all young men who lead "Paris life." And his mother, haughtily severe though she was, seemed to excuse this, as if in her opinion a man of his birth was bound by way of protest to keep apart from official life under a Republic. However, she no doubt had more intimate, more disturbing reasons for indulgence. She had nearly lost him when he was only seven, through an attack of brain fever. At eighteen he had complained of his heart, and the doctors had recommended that he should be treated gently in all respects. She knew, therefore, what a lie lurked behind his proud demeanour, within his lofty figure, that haughty *façade* of his race. He was but dust, ever threatened with illness and collapse. In

<sup>1</sup> About 3000 dollars.

the depths of his seeming virility there was merely girlish *abandon*, and he was simply a weak, good-natured fellow, liable to every stumble. It was on the occasion of a visit which he had paid with his mother to the Asylum of the Invalids of Labour that he had first seen Eve, whom he continued to meet; his mother, closing her eyes to this culpable connection in a sphere of society which she treated with contempt, in the same way as she had closed them to so many other acts of folly which she had forgiven because she regarded them as the mere lapses of an ailing child. Moreover, Eve had made a conquest of Madame de Quinsac, who was very pious, by an action which had recently amazed society. It had been suddenly learnt that she had allowed Monseigneur Martha to convert her to the Roman Catholic faith. This thing, which she had refused to do when solicited by her lawful husband, she had now done in the hope of ensuring herself a lover's eternal affection. And all Paris was still stirred by the magnificence exhibited at the Madeleine, on the occasion of the baptism of this Jewess of five-and-forty, whose beauty and whose tears had upset every heart.

Gérard, on his side, was still flattered by the deep and touching tenderness shown to him; but weariness was coming, and he had already sought to break off the connection by avoiding any further assignations. He well understood Eve's glances and her tears, and though he was moved at sight of them he tried to excuse himself. "I assure you," said he, "my mother has kept me so busy that I could not get away." But she, without a word, still turned her tearful glance on

him, and weak, like herself, in despair that he should have been left alone with her in this fashion, he yielded, unable to continue refusing. "Well, then," said he, "this afternoon at four o'clock if you are free."

He had lowered his voice in speaking, but a slight rustle made him turn his head and start like one in fault. It was the Baroness's daughter Camille entering the room. She had heard nothing, but by the smile which the others had exchanged, by the very quiver of the air, she understood everything; an assignation for that very day and at the very spot which she suspected. Some slight embarrassment followed, an exchange of anxious and evil glances.

Camille, at three-and-twenty, was a very dark young woman, short of stature and somewhat deformed, with her left shoulder higher than the right. There seemed to be nothing of her father or mother in her. Her case was one of those unforeseen accidents in family heredity which make people wonder whence they can arise. Her only pride lay in her beautiful black eyes and superb black hair, which, short as she was, would, said she, have sufficed to clothe her. But her nose was long, her face deviated to the left, and her chin was pointed. Her thin, witty, and malicious lips bespoke all the rancour and perverse anger stored in the heart of this uncomely creature, whom the thought of her uncomeliness enraged. However, the one whom she most hated in the whole world was her own mother, that *amorosa* who was so little fitted to be a mother, who had never loved her, never paid attention to her, but had abandoned her to the care of servants from her very infancy. In this wise real hatred had grown up

between the two women, mute and frigid on the one side, and active and passionate on the other. The daughter hated her mother because she found her beautiful, because she had not been created in the same image beautiful with the beauty with which her mother crushed her. Day by day she suffered at being sought by none, at realising that the adoration of one and all still went to her mother. As she was amusing in her maliciousness, people listened to her and laughed; however, the glances of all the men — even and indeed especially the younger ones — soon reverted to her triumphant mother, who seemingly defied old age. In part for this reason Camille, with ferocious determination, had decided that she would dispossess her mother of her last lover Gérard, and marry him herself, conscious that such a loss would doubtless kill the Baroness. Thanks to her promised dowry of five millions of francs, the young woman did not lack suitors; but, little flattered by their advances, she was accustomed to say, with her malicious laugh, “Oh! of course; why for five millions they would take a wife from a mad-house.” However, she, herself, had really begun to love Gérard, who, good-natured as he was, evinced much kindness towards this suffering young woman whom nature had treated so harshly. It worried him to see her forsaken by everyone, and little by little he yielded to the grateful tenderness which she displayed towards him, happy, handsome man that he was, at being regarded as a demi-god and having such a slave. Indeed, in his attempt to quit the mother there was certainly a thought of allowing the daughter to marry him, which would be an agreeable ending to

it all, though he did not as yet acknowledge this, ashamed as he felt and embarrassed by his illustrious name and all the complications and tears which he foresaw.

The silence continued. Camille with her piercing glance, as sharp as any knife, had told her mother that she knew the truth; and then with another and pain-fraught glance she had complained to Gérard. He, in order to re-establish equilibrium, could only think of a compliment. "Good morning, Camille. Ah! that havana-brown gown of yours looks nice! It's astonishing how well rather sombre colours suit you."

Camille glanced at her mother's white robe, and then at her own dark gown, which scarcely allowed her neck and wrists to be seen. "Yes," she replied laughing, "I only look passable when I don't dress as a young girl."

Eve, ill at ease, worried by the growth of a rivalry in which she did not as yet wish to believe, changed the conversation "Isn't your brother there?" she asked

"Why yes, we came down together."

Hyacinthe, who came in at that moment, shook hands with Gérard in a weary way. He was twenty, and had inherited his mother's pale blond hair, and her long face full of Oriental languor; while from his father he had derived his grey eyes and thick lips, expressive of unscrupulous appetites. A wretched scholar, regarding every profession with the same contempt, he had decided to do nothing. Spoilt by his father, he took some little interest in poetry and music, and lived in an extraordinary circle of artists, low

women, madmen and bandits; boasting himself of all sorts of crimes and vices, professing the very worst philosophical and social ideas, invariably going to extremes, becoming in turn a Collectivist, an Individualist, an Anarchist, a Pessimist, a Symbolist, and what not besides; without, however, ceasing to be a Catholic, as this conjunction of Catholicity with something else seemed to him the supreme *bon ton*. In reality he was simply empty and rather a fool. In four generations the vigorous hungry blood of the Duvillards, after producing three magnificent beasts of prey, had, as if exhausted by the contentment of every passion, ended in this sorry emasculated creature, who was incapable alike of great knavery or great debauchery.

Camille, who was too intelligent not to realise her brother's nothingness, was fond of teasing him; and looking at him as he stood there, tightly buttoned in his long frock coat with pleated skirt—a resurrection of the romantic period, which he carried to exaggeration, she resumed. “Mamma has been asking for you, Hyacinthe. Come and show her your gown. You are the one who would look nice dressed as a young girl.”

However, he eluded her without replying. He was covertly afraid of her, though they lived together in great intimacy, frankly exchanging confidences respecting their perverse views of life. And he directed a glance of disdain at the wonderful basket of orchids which seemed to him past the fashion, far too common nowadays. For his part he had left the lilies of life behind him, and reached the ranunculus, the flower of blood.



The two last guests who were expected now arrived almost together. The first was the investigating magistrate Amadiou, a little man of five-and-forty, who was an intimate of the household and had been brought into notoriety by a recent anarchist affair. Between a pair of fair, bushy whiskers he displayed a flat, regular judicial face, to which he tried to impart an expression of keenness by wearing a single eyeglass behind which his glance sparkled. Very worldly, moreover, he belonged to the new judicial school, being a distinguished psychologist and having written a book in reply to the abuses of criminalist physiology. And he was also a man of great, tenacious ambition, fond of notoriety and ever on the lookout for those resounding legal affairs which bring glory. Behind him, at last appeared General de Bozonnet, Gérard's uncle on the maternal side, a tall, lean old man with a nose like an eagle's beak. Chronic rheumatism had recently compelled him to retire from the service. Raised to a colonelcy after the Franco-German War in reward for his gallant conduct at St. Privat, he had, in spite of his extremely monarchical connections, kept his sworn faith to Napoleon III. And he was excused in his own sphere of society for this species of military Bonapartism, on account of the bitterness with which he accused the Republic of having ruined the army. Worthy fellow that he was, extremely fond of his sister, Madame de Quinsac, it seemed as though he acted in accordance with some secret desire of hers in accepting the invitations of Baroness Duvillard by way of rendering Gérard's constant presence in her house more natural and excusable.

However, the Baron and Duthil now returned from the study, laughing loudly in an exaggerated way, doubtless to make the others believe that they were quite easy in mind. And one and all passed into the large dining-room where a big wood fire was burning, its gay flames shining like a ray of springtide amid the fine mahogany furniture of English make laden with silver and crystal. The room, of a soft mossy green, had an unassuming charm in the pale light, and the table which in the centre displayed the richness of its covers and the immaculate whiteness of its linen adorned with Venetian point, seemed to have flowered miraculously with a wealth of large tea roses, most admirable blooms for the season, and of delicious perfume.

The Baroness seated the General on her right, and Amadiou on her left. The Baron on his right placed Duthil, and on his left Gérard. Then the young people installed themselves at either end, Camille between Gérard and the General, and Hyacinthe between Duthil and Amadiou. And forthwith, from the moment of starting on the scrambled eggs and truffles, conversation began, the usual conversation of Parisian *déjeuners*, when every event, great or little, of the morning or the day before is passed in review. the truths and the falsehoods current in every social sphere, the financial scandal, and the political adventure of the hour, the novel that has just appeared, the play that has just been produced, the stories which should only be retailed in whispers, but which are repeated aloud. And beneath all the light wit which circulates, beneath all the laughter, which often has a

false ring, each retains his or her particular worry, or distress of mind, at times so acute that it becomes perfect agony.

With his quiet and wonted impudence, the Baron, bravely enough, was the first to speak of the article in the "*Voix du Peuple*." "I say, have you read Sagnier's article this morning? It's a good one; he has *verve* you know, but what a dangerous lunatic he is!"

This set everybody at ease, for the article would certainly have weighed upon the *déjeuner* had no one mentioned it

"It's the 'Panama' dodge over again!" cried Duthil. "But no, no, we've had quite enough of it!"

"Why," resumed the Baron, "the affair of the African Railway Lines is as clear as spring water! All those whom Sagnier threatens may sleep in peace. The truth is that it's a scheme to upset Barroux's ministry. Leave to interpellate will certainly be asked for this afternoon. You'll see what a fine uproar there'll be in the Chamber."

"That libellous, scandal-seeking press," said Amadieu gravely, "is a dissolving agent which will bring France to ruin. We ought to have laws against it."

The General made an angry gesture: "Laws, what's the use of them, since nobody has the courage to enforce them."

Silence fell. With a light, discreet step the house-steward presented some grilled mullet. So noiseless was the service amid the cheerful perfumed warmth that not even the faintest clatter of crockery was heard. Without anyone knowing how it had come about, however, the conversation had suddenly changed; and

somebody inquired: "So the revival of the piece is postponed?"

"Yes," said Gérard, "I heard this morning that 'Polyeucte' wouldn't get its turn till April at the earliest."

At this Camille, who had hitherto remained silent, watching the young Count and seeking to win him back, turned her glittering eyes upon her father and mother. It was a question of that revival in which Silviane was so stubbornly determined to make her *début*. However, the Baron and the Baroness evinced perfect serenity, having long been acquainted with all that concerned each other. Moreover Eve was too much occupied with her own passion to think of anything else; and the Baron too busy with the fresh application which he intended to make in tempestuous fashion at the Ministry of Fine Arts, so as to wrest Silviane's engagement from those in office. He contented himself with saying. "How would you have them revive pieces at the Comédie! They have no actresses left there."

"Oh, by the way," the Baroness on her side simply remarked, "yesterday, in that play at the Vaudeville, Delphine Vignot wore such an exquisite gown. She's the only one too who knows how to arrange her hair."

Thereupon Duthil, in somewhat veiled language, began to relate a story about Delphine and a well-known senator. And then came another scandal, the sudden and almost suspicious death of a lady friend of the Duvillards'; whereupon the General, without any transition, broke in to relieve his bitter feelings by denouncing the idiotic manner in which the army

was nowadays organised. Meantime the old Bordeaux glittered like ruby blood in the delicate crystal glasses. A truffled fillet of venison had just cast its somewhat sharp scent amidst the dying perfume of the roses, when some asparagus made its appearance, a *primeur* which once had been so rare but which no longer caused any astonishment.

"Nowadays we get it all through the winter," said the Baron with a gesture of disenchantment.

"And so," asked Gérard at the same moment, "the Princess de Harn's *matinée* is for this afternoon?"

Camille quickly intervened. "Yes, this afternoon. Shall you go?"

"No, I don't think so, I shan't be able," replied the young man in embarrassment.

"Ah! that little Princess, she's really deranged you know," exclaimed Duthil. "You are aware that she calls herself a widow? But the truth, it seems, is that her husband, a real Prince, connected with a royal house and very handsome, is travelling about the world in the company of a singer. She with her vicious urchin-like face preferred to come and reign in Paris, in that mansion of the Avenue Hoche, which is certainly the most extraordinary Noah's ark imaginable, with its swarming of cosmopolitan society indulging in every extravagance!"

"Be quiet, you malicious fellow," the Baroness gently interrupted. "We, here, are very fond of Rosemonde, who is a charming woman."

"Oh! certainly," Camille again resumed. "She invited us; and we are going to her place by-and-by, are we not, mamma?"

To avoid replying, the Baroness pretended that she did not hear, whilst Duthil, who seemed to be well-informed concerning the Princess, continued to make merry over her intended *matinée*, at which she meant to produce some Spanish dancing girls, whose performance was so very indecorous that all Paris, forewarned of the circumstance, would certainly swarm to her house. And he added. "You've heard that she has given up painting. Yes, she busies herself with chemistry. Her *salon* is full of Anarchists now — and, by the way, it seemed to me that she had cast her eyes on you, my dear Hyacinthe."

Hyacinthe had hitherto held his tongue, as if he took no interest in anything. "Oh! she bores me to death," he now condescended to reply. "If I'm going to her *matinée* it's simply in the hope of meeting my friend young Lord George Eldrett, who wrote to me from London to give me an appointment at the Princess's. And I admit that hers is the only *salon* where I find somebody to talk to."

"And so," asked Amadiou in an ironical way, "you have now gone over to Anarchism?"

With his air of lofty elegance Hyacinthe imperturbably confessed his creed: "But it seems to me, monsieur, that in these times of universal baseness and ignominy, no man of any distinction can be other than an Anarchist."

A laugh ran round the table. Hyacinthe was very much spoilt, and considered very entertaining. His father in particular was immensely amused by the notion that he of all men should have an Anarchist for a son. However, the General, in his rancorous

moments, talked anarchically enough of blowing up a society which was so stupid as to let itself be led by half a dozen disreputable characters. And, indeed, the investigating magistrate, who was gradually making a specialty of Anarchist affairs, proved the only one who opposed the young man, defending threatened civilisation and giving terrifying particulars concerning what he called the army of devastation and massacre. The others, while partaking of some delicious duck's-liver *paté*, which the house-steward handed around, continued smiling. There was so much misery, said they; one must take everything into account: things would surely end by righting themselves. And the Baron himself declared, in a conciliatory manner: "It's certain that one might do something, though nobody knows exactly what. As for all sensible and moderate claims, oh! I agree to them in advance. For instance, the lot of the working classes may be ameliorated, charitable enterprises may be undertaken, such, for instance, as our Asylum for the Invalids of Labour, which we have reason to be proud of. But we must not be asked for impossibilities."

With the dessert came a sudden spell of silence; it was as if, amidst the restless fluttering of the conversation, and the dizziness born of the copious meal, each one's worry or distress was again wringing the heart and setting an expression of perturbation on the countenance. The nervous unconscientiousness of Duthil, threatened with denunciation, was seen to revive; so, too, the anxious anger of the Baron, who was meditating how he might possibly manage to content Silviane. That woman was this sturdy, powerful

man's taint, the secret sore which would perhaps end by eating him away and destroying him. But it was the frightful drama in which the Baroness, Camille and Gérard were concerned that flitted by most visibly across the faces of all three of them. that hateful rivalry of mother and daughter, contending for the man they loved. And, meantime, the silver-gilt blades of the dessert-knives were delicately peeling choice fruit. And there were bunches of golden grapes looking beautifully fresh, and a procession of sweetmeats, little cakes, an infinity of dainties, over which the most satiated appetites lingered complacently.

Then, just as the finger-glasses were being served, a footman came and bent over the Baroness, who answered in an undertone, "Well, show him into the *salon*, I will join him there." And aloud to the others she added: "It's Monsieur l'Abbé Froment, who has called and asks most particularly to see me. He won't be in our way; I think that almost all of you know him. Oh! he's a genuine saint, and I have much sympathy for him."

For a few minutes longer they loitered round the table, and then at last quitted the dining-room, which was full of the odours of viands, wines, fruits and roses; quite warm, too, with the heat thrown out by the big logs of firewood, which were falling into embers amidst the somewhat jumbled brightness of all the crystal and silver, and the pale, delicate light which fell upon the disorderly table.

Pierre had remained standing in the centre of the little blue and silver *salon*. Seeing a tray on which the coffee and the liqueurs were in readiness, he



regretted that he had insisted upon being received. And his embarrassment increased when the company came in rather noisily, with bright eyes and rosy cheeks. However, his charitable fervour had revived so ardently within him that he overcame this embarrassment, and all that remained to him of it was a slight feeling of discomfort at bringing the whole frightful morning which he had just spent amid such scenes of wretchedness, so much darkness and cold, so much filth and hunger, into this bright, warm, perfumed affluence, where the useless and the superfluous overflowed around those folks who seemed so gay at having made a delightful meal.

However, the Baroness at once came forward with Gérard, for it was through the latter, whose mother he knew, that the priest had been presented to the Duvillards at the time of the famous conversion. And as he apologised for having called at such an inconvenient hour, the Baroness responded: "But you are always welcome, Monsieur l'Abbé. You will allow me just to attend to my guests, won't you? I will be with you in an instant."

She thereupon returned to the table on which the tray had been placed, in order to serve the coffee and the liqueurs, with her daughter's assistance. Gérard, however, remained with Pierre; and, it so chanced, began to speak to him of the Asylum for the Invalids of Labour, where they had met one another at the recent laying of the foundation-stone of a new pavilion which was being erected, thanks to a handsome donation of 100,000 francs made by Baron Duvillard. So far, the enterprise only comprised four pavilions

out of the fourteen which it was proposed to erect on the vast site given by the City of Paris on the peninsula of Gennevilliers<sup>1</sup>; and so the subscription fund remained open, and, indeed, no little noise was made over this charitable enterprise, which was regarded as a complete and peremptory reply to the accusations of those evilly disposed persons who charged the satiated *bourgeoisie* with doing nothing for the workers. But the truth was that a magnificent chapel, erected in the centre of the site, had absorbed two-thirds of the funds hitherto collected. Numerous lady patronesses, chosen from all the "worlds" of Paris—the Baroness Duvillard, the Countess de Quinsac, the Princess Rosemonde de Harn, and a score of others—were entrusted with the task of keeping the enterprise alive by dint of collections and fancy bazaars. But success had been chiefly obtained, thanks to the happy idea of ridding the ladies of all the weighty cares of organisation, by choosing as managing director a certain Fonsèque, who, besides being a deputy and editor of the "Globe" newspaper, was a prodigious promoter of all sorts of enterprises. And the "Globe" never paused in its propaganda, but answered the attacks of the revolutionaries by extolling the inexhaustible charity of the governing classes in such wise that, at the last elections, the enterprise had served as a victorious electoral weapon.

However, Camille was walking about with a steam-

<sup>1</sup> This so-called peninsula lies to the northwest of Paris, and is formed by the windings of the Seine.—*Trans.*

ing cup of coffee in her hand "Will you take some coffee, Monsieur l'Abbé?" she inquired

"No, thank you, mademoiselle"

"A glass of Chartreuse then?"

"No, thank you"

Then everybody being served, the Baroness came back and said amiably: "Come, Monsieur l'Abbé, what do you desire of me?"

Pierre began to speak almost in an undertone, his throat contracting and his heart beating with emotion. "I have come, madame, to appeal to your great kindness of heart. This morning, in a frightful house, in the Rue des Saules, behind Montmartre, I beheld a sight which utterly upset me. You can have no idea what an abode of misery and suffering it was; its inmates without fire or bread, the men reduced to idleness because there is no work, the mothers having no more milk for their babes, the children barely clad, coughing and shivering. And among all these horrors I saw the worst, the most abominable of all, an old workman, laid on his back by age, dying of hunger, huddled on a heap of rags, in a nook which a dog would not even accept as kennel"

He tried to recount things as discreetly as possible, frightened by the very words he spoke, the horrors he had to relate in that sphere of superlative luxury and enjoyment, before those happy ones who possessed all the gifts of this world; for—to use a slang expression—he fully realised that he sang out of tune, and in most uncourteous fashion. What a strange idea of his to have called at the hour when one has just finished *déjeuner*, when the aroma of hot coffee flat-

ters happy digestion. Nevertheless he went on, and even ended by raising his voice, yielding to the feeling of revolt which gradually stirred him, going to the end of his terrible narrative, naming Laveuve, insisting on the unjust abandonment in which the old man was left, and asking for succour in the name of human compassion. And the whole company approached to listen to him; he could see the Baron and the General, and Duthil and Amadiou, in front of him, sipping their coffee, in silence, without a gesture.

"Well, madame," he concluded, "it seemed to me that one could not leave that old man an hour longer in such a frightful position, and that this very evening you would have the extreme goodness to have him admitted into the Asylum of the Invalids of Labour, which is, I think, the proper and only place for him."

Tears had moistened Eve's beautiful eyes. She was in consternation at so sad a story coming to her to spoil her afternoon when she was looking forward to her assignation with Gérard. Weak and indolent as she was, lacking all initiative, too much occupied moreover with her own person, she had only accepted the presidency of the Committee on the condition that all administrative worries were to fall on Fonsèque. "Ah! Monsieur l'Abbé," she murmured, "you rend my heart. But I can do nothing, nothing at all, I assure you. Moreover, I believe that we have already inquired into the affair of that man Laveuve. With us, you know, there must be the most serious guarantees with regard to every admission. A reporter is chosen who has to give us full information. Wasn't it you, Mon-

sieur Duthil, who was charged with this man Laveuve's affair ? ”

The deputy was finishing a glass of Chartreuse “Yes, it was I That fine fellow played you a comedy, Monsieur l'Abbé He isn't at all ill, and if you left him any money you may be sure he went down to drink it as soon as you were gone. For he is always drunk; and, besides that, he has the most hateful disposition imaginable, crying out from morning till evening against the *bourgeois*, and saying that if he had any strength left in his arms he would undertake to blow up the whole show. And, moreover, he won't go into the asylum; he says that it's a real prison where one's guarded by Beguins who force one to hear mass, a dirty convent where the gates are shut at nine in the evening! And there are so many of them like that, who rather than be succoured prefer their liberty, with cold and hunger and death. Well then, let the Laveuves die in the street, since they refuse to be with us, and be warm and eat in our asylums!”

The General and Amadieu nodded their heads approvingly. But Duvillard showed himself more generous. “No, no, indeed! A man's a man after all, and should be succoured in spite of himself.”

Eve, however, in despair at the idea that she would be robbed of her afternoon, struggled and sought for reasons. “I assure you that my hands are altogether tied. Monsieur l'Abbé does not doubt my heart or my zeal. But how can I possibly assemble the Committee without a few days' delay? And I have particular reasons for coming to no decision, especially

in an affair which has already been inquired into and pronounced upon, without the Committee's sanction." Then, all at once she found a solution. "What I advise you to do, Monsieur l'Abbé, is to go at once to see Monsieur Fonsègue, our managing director. He alone can act in an urgent case, for he knows that the ladies have unlimited confidence in him and approve everything he does."

"You will find Fonsègue at the Chamber," added Duthil smiling, "only the sitting will be a warm one, and I doubt whether you will be able to have a comfortable chat with him."

Pierre, whose heart had contracted yet more painfully, insisted on the subject no further; but at once made up his mind to see Fonsègue, and in any event obtain from him a promise that the wretched Laveuve should be admitted to the Asylum that very evening. Then he lingered in the saloon for a few minutes listening to Gérard, who obligingly pointed out to him how he might best convince the deputy, which was by alleging how bad an effect such a story could have, should it be brought to light by the revolutionary newspapers. However, the guests were beginning to take their leave. The General, as he went off, came to ask his nephew if he should see him that afternoon at his mother's, Madame de Quinsac, whose "day" it was. a question which the young man answered with an evasive gesture when he noticed that both Eve and Camille were looking at him. Then came the turn of Amadiou, who hurried off saying that a serious affair required his presence at the Palace of Justice. And Duthil soon followed him in order to repair to the

"I'll see you between four and five at Silviane's, eh?" said the Baron as he conducted him to the door. "Come and tell me what occurs at the Chamber in consequence of that odious article of Sagnier's. I must at all events know. For my part I shall go to the Ministry of Fine Arts, to settle that affair of the Comédie, and besides I've some calls to make, some contractors to see, and a big launching and advertisement affair to settle."

"It's understood then, between four and five, at Silviane's," said the deputy, who went off again mastered by his vague uneasiness, his anxiety as to what turn that nasty affair of the African Railway Lines might take.

And all of them had forgotten Laveuve, the miserable wretch who lay at death's door; and all of them were hastening away to their business or their passions, caught in the toils, sinking under the grindstone and whisked away by that rush of all Paris, whose fever bore them along, throwing one against another in an ardent scramble, in which the sole question was who should pass over the others and crush them.

"And so, mamma," said Camille, who continued to scrutinise her mother and Gérard, "you are going to take us to the Princess's *matinée*?"

"By-and-by, yes. Only I shan't be able to stay there with you. I received a telegram from Salmon about my corsage this morning, and I must absolutely go to try it on at four o'clock."

By the slight trembling of her mother's voice, the girl felt certain that she was telling a falsehood. "Oh!" said she, "I thought you were only going to

try it on to-morrow? In that case I suppose we are to go and call for you at Salmon's with the carriage on leaving the *matinée*?"

"Oh! no my dear! One never knows when one will be free; and besides, if I have a moment, I shall call at the *modiste's*."

Camille's secret rage brought almost a murderous glare to her dark eyes. The truth was evident. But however passionately she might desire to set some obstacle across her mother's path, she could not, dared not, carry matters any further. In vain had she attempted to implore Gérard with her eyes. He was standing to take his leave, and turned away his eyes. Pierre, who had become acquainted with many things since he had frequented the house, noticed how all three of them quivered, and divined thereby the mute and terrible drama.

At this moment, however, Hyacinthe, stretched in an armchair, and munching an ether capsule, the only liqueur in which he indulged, raised his voice. "For my part, you know, I'm going to the Exposition du Lis. All Paris is swarming there. There's one painting in particular, 'The Rape of a Soul,' which it's absolutely necessary for one to have seen."

"Well, but I don't refuse to drive you there," resumed the Baroness. "Before going to the Princess's we can look in at that exhibition."

"That's it, that's it," hastily exclaimed Camille, who, though she harshly derided the symbolist painters as a rule, now doubtless desired to delay her mother. Then, forcing herself to smile, she asked: "Won't you risk a look-in at the Exposition du Lis with us, Monsieur Gérard?"



“Well, no,” replied the Count, “I want to walk. I shall go with Monsieur l’Abbé Froment to the Chamber.”

Thereupon he took leave of mother and daughter, kissing the hand of each in turn. It had just occurred to him that to while away his time he also might call for a moment at Silviane’s, where, like the others, he had his *entrées*. On reaching the cold and solemn courtyard he said to the priest, “Ah! it does one good to breathe a little cool air. They keep their rooms too hot, and all those flowers, too, give one the headache.”

Pierre for his part was going off with his brain in a whirl, his hands feverish, his senses oppressed by all the luxury which he left behind him, like the dream of some glowing, perfumed paradise where only the elect had their abode. At the same time his reviving thirst for charity had become keener than ever, and without listening to the Count, who was speaking very affectionately of his mother, he reflected as to how he might obtain Laveuve’s admission to the Asylum from Fonsègue. However, when the door of the mansion had closed behind them and they had taken a few steps along the street, it occurred to Pierre that a moment previously a sudden vision had met his gaze. Had he not seen a workman carrying a tool-bag, standing and waiting on the foot pavement across the road, gazing at that monumental door, closed upon so much fabulous wealth — a workman in whom he fancied he had recognised Salvat, that hungry fellow who had gone off that morning in search of work? At this thought Pierre hastily turned round. Such wretchedness in face of so much affluence and enjoyment made

him feel anxious. But the workman, disturbed in his contemplation, and possibly fearing that he had been recognised, was going off with dragging step. And now, getting only a back view of him, Pierre hesitated, and ended by thinking that he must have been mistaken.

### III

#### RANTERS AND RULERS

WHEN Abbé Froment was about to enter the Palais-Bourbon he remembered that he had no card, and he was making up his mind that he would simply ask for Fonsègue, though he was not known to him, when, on reaching the vestibule, he perceived Mège, the Collectivist deputy, with whom he had become acquainted in his days of militant charity in the poverty-stricken Charonne district.

"What, you here? You surely have not come to evangelise us?" said Mège.

"No, I've come to see Monsieur Fonsègue on an urgent matter, about a poor fellow who cannot wait."

"Fonsègue? I don't know if he has arrived. Wait a moment." And stopping a short, dark young fellow with a ferreting, mouse-like air, Mège said to him: "Massot, here's Monsieur l'Abbé Froment, who wants to speak to your governor at once."

"The governor? But he isn't here. I left him at the office of the paper, where he'll be detained for another quarter of an hour. However, if Monsieur l'Abbé likes to wait he will surely see him here."

Thereupon Mège ushered Pierre into the large waiting-hall, the Salle des Pas Perdus, which in other moments looked so vast and cold with its bronze

Minerva and Laocoon, and its bare walls on which the pale mournful winter light fell from the glass doors communicating with the garden. Just then, however, it was crowded, and warmed, as it were, by the feverish agitation of the many groups of men that had gathered here and there, and the constant coming and going of those who hastened through the throng. Most of these were deputies, but there were also numerous journalists and inquisitive visitors. And a growing uproar prevailed. colloquies now in undertones, now in loud voices, exclamations and bursts of laughter, amidst a deal of passionate gesticulation. Mège's return into the tumult seemed to fan it. He was tall, apostolically thin, and somewhat neglectful of his person, looking already old and worn for his age, which was but five and forty, though his eyes still glowed with youth behind the glasses which never left his beak-like nose. And he had a warm but grating voice, and had always been known to cough, living on solely because he was bitterly intent on doing so in order to realise the dream of social reorganisation which haunted him. The son of an impoverished medical man of a northern town, he had come to Paris when very young, living there during the Empire on petty newspaper and other unknown work, and first making a reputation as an orator at the public meetings of the time. Then, after the war, having become the chief of the Collectivist party, thanks to his ardent faith and the extraordinary activity of his fighting nature, he had at last managed to enter the Chamber, where, brimful of information, he fought for his ideas with fierce determination and

obstinacy, like a *doctrinaire* who has decided in his own mind what the world ought to be, and who regulates in advance, and bit by bit, the whole dogma of Collectivism. However, since he had taken pay as a deputy, the outside Socialists had looked upon him as a mere rhetorician, an aspiring dictator who only tried to cast society in a new mould for the purpose of subordinating it to his personal views and ruling it.

"You know what is going on?" he said to Pierre. "This is another nice affair, is it not? But what would you have? We are in mud to our very ears."

He had formerly conceived genuine sympathy for the priest, whom he had found so gentle with all who suffered, and so desirous of social regeneration. And the priest himself had ended by taking an interest in this authoritarian dreamer, who was resolved to make men happy in spite even of themselves. He knew that he was poor, and led a retired life with his wife and four children, to whom he was devoted.

"You can well understand that I am no ally of Sagnier's," Mège resumed. "But as he chose to speak out this morning and threaten to publish the names of all those who have taken bribes, we can't allow ourselves to pass as accomplices any further. It has long been said that there was some nasty jobbery in that suspicious affair of the African railways. And the worst is that two members of the present Cabinet are in question, for three years ago, when the Chambers dealt with Duvillard's emission, Barroux was at the Home Department, and Monferrand at that of Public Works. Now that they have come back again, Monferrand at the Home Department, and Barroux at

that of Finance, with the Presidency of the Council, it isn't possible, is it, for us to do otherwise than compel them to enlighten us, in their own interest even, about their former goings-on? No, no, they can no longer keep silence, and I've announced that I intend to interpellate them this very day."

It was the announcement of Mège's interpellation, following the terrible article of the "*Voix du Peuple*," which thus set the lobbies in an uproar. And Pierre remained rather scared at this big political affair falling into the midst of his scheme to save a wretched pauper from hunger and death. Thus he listened without fully understanding the explanations which the Socialist deputy was passionately giving him, while all around them the uproar increased, and bursts of laughter rang out, testifying to the astonishment which the others felt at seeing Mège in conversation with a priest.

"How stupid they are!" said Mège disdainfully. "Do they think then that I eat a cassock for *déjeuner* every morning? But I beg your pardon, my dear Monsieur Froment. Come, take a place on that seat and wait for Fonsègue."

Then he himself plunged into all the turmoil, and Pierre realised that his best course was to sit down and wait quietly. His surroundings began to influence and interest him, and he gradually forgot La-veuve for the passion of the Parliamentary crisis amidst which he found himself cast. The frightful Panama adventure was scarcely over; he had followed the progress of that tragedy with the anguish of a man who every night expects to hear the tocsin sound the

last hour of olden, agonising society And now a little Panama was beginning, a fresh cracking of the social edifice, an affair such as had been frequent in all parliaments in connection with big financial questions, but one which acquired mortal gravity from the circumstances in which it came to the front That story of the African Railway Lines, that little patch of mud, stirred up and exhaling a perturbing odour, and suddenly fomenting all that emotion, fear, and anger in the Chamber, was after all but an opportunity for political strife, a field on which the voracious appetites of the various "groups" would take exercise and sharpen; and, at bottom, the sole question was that of overthrowing the ministry and replacing it by another. Only, behind all that lust of power, that continuous onslaught of ambition, what a distressful prey was stirring—the whole people with all its poverty and its sufferings!

Pierre noticed that Massot, "little Massot," as he was generally called, had just seated himself on the bench beside him. With his lively eye and ready ear listening to everything and noting it, gliding everywhere with his ferret-like air, Massot was not there in the capacity of a gallery man, but had simply scented a stormy debate, and come to see if he could not pick up material for some occasional "copy." And this priest lost in the midst of the throng doubtless interested him.

"Have a little patience, Monsieur l'Abbé," said he, with the amiable gaiety of a young gentleman who makes fun of everything. "The governor will certainly come, for he knows well enough that they are

going to heat the oven here. You are not one of his constituents from La Corrèze, are you ? ”

“No, no ! I belong to Paris ; I’ve come on account of a poor fellow whom I wish to get admitted into the Asylum of the Invalids of Labour.”

“Oh ! all right. Well, I’m a child of Paris, too.”

Then Massot laughed. And indeed he was a child of Paris, son of a chemist of the St. Denis district, and an ex-dunce of the Lycée Charlemagne, where he had not even finished his studies. He had failed entirely, and at eighteen years of age had found himself cast into journalism with barely sufficient knowledge of orthography for that calling. And for twelve years now, as he often said, he had been a rolling stone wandering through all spheres of society, confessing some and guessing at others. He had seen everything, and become disgusted with everything, no longer believing in the existence of great men, or of truth, but living peacefully enough on universal malice and folly. He naturally had no literary ambition, in fact he professed a deliberate contempt for literature. Withal, he was not a fool, but wrote in accordance with no matter what views in no matter what newspaper, having neither conviction nor belief, but quietly claiming the right to say whatever he pleased to the public on condition that he either amused or impassioned it

“And so,” said he, “you know Mège, Monsieur l’Abbé ? What a study in character, eh ? A big child, a dreamer of dreams in the skin of a terrible sectarian ! Oh ! I have had a deal of intercourse with him, I know him thoroughly. You are no doubt



aware that he lives on with the everlasting conviction that he will attain to power in six months' time, and that between evening and morning he will have established that famous Collectivist community which is to succeed capitalist society, just as day follows night. And, by the way, as regards his interpellation to-day, he is convinced that in overthrowing the Barroux ministry he'll be hastening his own turn. His system is to use up his adversaries. How many times haven't I heard him making his calculations: there's such a one to be used up, then such a one, and then such a one, so that he himself may at last reign. And it's always to come off in six months at the latest. The misfortune is, however, that others are always springing up, and so his turn never comes at all."

Little Massot openly made merry over it. Then, slightly lowering his voice, he asked: "And Sagnier, do you know him? No? Do you see that red-haired man with the bull's neck—the one who looks like a butcher? That one yonder who is talking in a little group of frayed frock-coats"

Pierre at last perceived the man in question. He had broad red ears, a hanging under-lip, a large nose, and big, projecting dull eyes.

"I know that one thoroughly, as well," continued Massot; "I was on the 'Voix du Peuple' under him before I went on the 'Globe.' The one thing that nobody is exactly aware of is whence Sagnier first came. He long dragged out his life in the lower depths of journalism, doing nothing at all brilliant, but wild with ambition and appetite. Perhaps you remember the first hubbub he made, that rather dirty

affair of a new Louis XVII. which he tried to launch, and which made him the extraordinary Royalist that he still is. Then it occurred to him to espouse the cause of the masses, and he made a display of vengeful Catholic socialism, attacking the Republic and all the abominations of the times in the name of justice and morality, under the pretext of curing them. He began with a series of sketches of financiers, a mass of dirty, uncontrolled, unproved tittle-tattle, which ought to have led him to the dock, but which met, as you know, with such wonderful success when gathered together in a volume. And he goes on in the same style in the '*Voix du Peuple*,' which he himself made a success at the time of the Panama affair by dint of denunciation and scandal, and which to-day is like a sewer-pipe pouring forth all the filth of the times. And whenever the stream slackens, why, he invents things just to satisfy his craving for that hubbub on which both his pride and his pocket subsist."

Little Massot spoke without bitterness; indeed, he had even begun to laugh again. Beneath his thoughtless ferocity he really felt some respect for Sagnier. "Oh! he's a bandit," he continued, "but a clever fellow all the same. You can't imagine how full of vanity he is. Lately it occurred to him to get himself acclaimed by the populace, for he pretends to be a kind of King of the Markets, you know. Perhaps he has ended by taking his fine judge-like airs in earnest, and really believes that he is saving the people and helping the cause of virtue. What astonishes me is his fertility in the arts of denunciation and scandalmongering. Never a morning comes but

he discovers some fresh horror, and delivers fresh culprits over to the hatred of the masses. No! the stream of mud never ceases; there is an incessant, unexpected spurt of infamy, an increase of monstrous fancies each time that the disgusted public shows any sign of weariness. And, do you know, there's genius in that, Monsieur l'Abbé; for he is well aware that his circulation goes up as soon as he threatens to speak out and publish a list of traitors and bribe-takers. His sales are certain now for some days to come."

Listening to Massot's gay, bantering voice, Pierre began to understand certain things, the exact meaning of which had hitherto escaped him. He ended by questioning the young journalist, surprised as he was that so many deputies should be in the lobbies when the sitting was in progress. Oh! the sitting indeed. The gravest matters, some bill of national interest, might be under discussion, yet every member fled from it at the sudden threat of an interpellation which might overturn the ministry. And the passion stirring there was the restrained anger, the growing anxiety of the present ministry's clients, who feared that they might have to give place to others; and it was also the sudden hope, the eager hunger of all who were waiting—the clients of the various possible ministries of the morrow.

Massot pointed to Barroux, the head of the Cabinet, who, though he was out of his element in the Department of Finances, had taken it simply because his generally recognised integrity was calculated to reassure public opinion after the Panama crisis. Barroux was chatting in a corner with the Minister of Public

Instruction, Senator Taboureaux, an old university man with a shrinking, mournful air, who was extremely honest, but totally ignorant of Paris, coming as he did from some far-away provincial faculty. Barroux for his part was of decorative aspect, tall, and with a handsome, clean-shaven face, which would have looked quite noble had not his nose been rather too small. Although he was sixty, he still had a profusion of curly snow-white hair completing the somewhat theatrical majesty of his appearance, which he was wont to turn to account when in the tribune. Coming of an old Parisian family, well-to-do, an advocate by profession, then a Republican journalist under the Empire, he had reached office with Gambetta, showing himself at once honest and romantic, loud of speech, and somewhat stupid, but at the same time very brave and very upright, and still clinging with ardent faith to the principles of the great Revolution. However, his Jacobinism was getting out of fashion, he was becoming an "ancestor," as it were, one of the last props of the middle-class Republic, and the new comers, the young politicians with long teeth, were beginning to smile at him. Moreover, beneath the ostentation of his demeanour, and the pomp of his eloquence, there was a man of hesitating, sentimental nature, a good fellow who shed tears when re-perusing the verses of Lamartine.

However, Monferrand, the minister for the Home Department, passed by and drew Barroux aside to whisper a few words in his ear. He, Monferrand, was fifty, short and fat, with a smiling, fatherly air; nevertheless a look of keen intelligence appeared at times on his round and somewhat common face

fringed by a beard which was still dark. In him one divined a man of government, with hands which were fitted for difficult tasks, and which never released a prey. Formerly mayor of the town of Tulle, he came from La Corrèze, where he owned a large estate. He was certainly a force in motion, one whose constant rise was anxiously watched by keen observers. He spoke in a simple quiet way, but with extraordinary power of conviction. Having apparently no ambition, affecting indeed the greatest disinterestedness, he nevertheless harboured the most ferocious appetites. Sagnier had written that he was a thief and a murderer, having strangled two of his aunts in order to inherit their property. But even if he were a murderer, he was certainly not a vulgar one.

Then, too, came another personage of the drama which was about to be performed—deputy Vignon, whose arrival agitated the various groups. The two ministers looked at him, whilst he, at once surrounded by his friends, smiled at them from a distance. He was not yet thirty-six. Slim, and of average height, very fair, with a fine blond beard of which he took great care, a Parisian by birth, having rapidly made his way in the government service, at one time Prefect at Bordeaux, he now represented youth and the future in the Chamber. He had realised that new men were needed in the direction of affairs in order to accomplish the more urgent, indispensable reforms; and very ambitious and intelligent as he was, knowing many things, he already had a programme, the application of which he was quite capable of attempting, in part at any rate. However, he evinced

no haste, but was full of prudence and shrewdness, convinced that his day would dawn, strong in the fact that he was as yet compromised in nothing, but had all space before him. At bottom he was merely a first-class administrator, clear and precise in speech, and his programme only differed from Barroux's by the rejuvenation of its formulas, although the advent of a Vignon ministry in place of a Barroux ministry appeared an event of importance. And it was of Vignon that Sagnier had written that he aimed at the Presidency of the Republic, even should he have to march through blood to reach the Elysée Palace.

"*Mon Dieu !*" Massot was explaining, "it's quite possible that Sagnier isn't lying this time, and that he has really found a list of names in some pocket-book of Hunter's that has fallen into his hands. I myself have long known that Hunter was Duvillard's vote-recruiter in the affair of the African Railways. But to understand matters one must first realise what his mode of proceeding was, the skill and the kind of amiable delicacy which he showed, which were far from the brutal corruption and dirty trafficking that people imagine. One must be such a man as Sagnier to picture a parliament as an open market, where every conscience is for sale and is impudently knocked down to the highest bidder. Oh! things happened in a very different way indeed; and they are explainable, and at times even excusable. Thus the article is levelled in particular against Barroux and Monferrand, who are designated in the clearest possible manner although they are not named. You are no doubt aware that at the time of the vote Barroux was at the Home Depart-

ment and Monferrand at that of Public Works, and so now they are accused of having betrayed their trusts, the blackest of all social crimes. I don't know into what political combinations Barroux may have entered, but I am ready to swear that he put nothing in his pocket, for he is the most honest of men. As for Monferrand, that's another matter, he's a man to carve himself his share, only I should be much surprised if he had put himself in a bad position. He's incapable of a blunder, particularly of a stupid blunder, like that of taking money and leaving a receipt for it lying about."

Massot paused, and with a jerk of his head called Pierre's attention to Duthil, who, feverish, but nevertheless smiling, stood in a group which had just collected around the two ministers. "There! do you see that young man yonder, that dark handsome fellow whose beard looks so triumphant?"

"I know him," said Pierre.

"Oh! you know Duthil. Well, he's one who most certainly took money. But he's a mere bird. He came to us from Angoulême to lead the pleasantest of lives here, and he has no more conscience, no more scruples, than the pretty finches of his native part, who are ever love-making. Ah! for Duthil, Hunter's money was like manna due to him, and he never even paused to think that he was dirtying his fingers. You may be quite sure he feels astonished that people should attach the slightest importance to the matter."

Then Massot designated another deputy in the same group, a man of fifty or thereabouts, of slovenly aspect and lachrymose mien, lanky, too, like a maypole, and somewhat bent by the weight of his head, which was

long and suggestive of a horse's. His scanty, straight, yellowish hair, his drooping moustaches, in fact the whole of his distracted countenance, expressed everlasting distress.

"And Chaigneux, do you know him?" continued Massot, referring to the deputy in question. "No? Well, look at him and ask yourself if it isn't quite as natural that he, too, should have taken money. He came from Arras. He was a solicitor there. When his division elected him he let politics intoxicate him, and sold his practice to make his fortune in Paris, where he installed himself with his wife and his three daughters. And you can picture his bewilderment amidst those four women, terrible women ever busy with finery, receiving and paying visits, and running after marriageable men who flee away. It's ill-luck with a vengeance, the daily defeat of a poor devil of mediocre attainments, who imagined that his position as a deputy would facilitate money-making, and who is drowning himself in it all. And so how can Chaigneux have done otherwise than take money, he who is always hard up for a five-hundred-franc note! I admit that originally he wasn't a dishonest man. But he's become one, that's all."

Massot was now fairly launched, and went on with his portraits, the series which he had, at one moment, dreamt of writing under the title of "Deputies for Sale." There were the simpletons who fell into the furnace, the men whom ambition goaded to exasperation, the low minds that yielded to the temptation of an open drawer, the company-promoters who grew intoxicated and lost ground by dint of dealing with big



figures. At the same time, however, Massot admitted that these men were relatively few in number, and that black sheep were to be found in every parliament of the world. Then Sagnier's name cropped up again, and Massot remarked that only Sagnier could regard the French Chambers as mere dens of thieves.

Pierre, meantime, felt most interested in the tempest which the threat of a ministerial crisis was stirring up before him. Not only the men like Duthil and Chaigneux, pale at feeling the ground tremble beneath them, and wondering whether they would not sleep at the Mazas prison that night, were gathered round Barroux and Monferrand; all the latter's clients were there, all who enjoyed influence or office through them, and who would collapse and disappear should they happen to fall. And it was something to see the anxious glances and the pale dread amidst all the whispered chatter, the bits of information and tittle-tattle which were carried hither and thither. Then, in a neighbouring group formed round Vignon, who looked very calm and smiled, were the other clients, those who awaited the moment to climb to the assault of power, in order that they, in their turn, might at last possess influence or office. Eyes glittered with covetousness, hopeful delight could be read in them, pleasant surprise at the sudden opportunity now offered. Vignon avoided replying to the over-direct questions of his friends, and simply announced that he did not intend to intervene. Evidently enough his plan was to let Mège interpellate and overthrow the ministry, for he did not fear him, and in his own esti-

mation would afterwards simply have to stoop to pick up the fallen portfolios.

“ Ah ! Monferrand now,” little Massot was saying, “ there’s a rascal who trims his sails ! I knew him as an anti-clerical, a devourer of priests, Monsieur l’Abbé, if you will allow me so to express myself ; however, I don’t say this to be agreeable to you, but I think I may tell you for certain that he has become reconciled to religion. At least, I have been told that Monseigneur Martha, who is a great converter, now seldom leaves him. This is calculated to please one in these new times, when science has become bankrupt, and religion blooms afresh with delicious mysticism on all sides, whether in art, literature, or society itself.”

Massot was jesting, according to his wont ; but he spoke so amiably that the priest could not do otherwise than bow. However, a great stir had set in before them ; it was announced that Mège was about to ascend the tribune, and thereupon all the deputies hastened into the assembly hall, leaving only the inquisitive visitors and a few journalists in the *Salle des Pas Perdus*.

“ It’s astonishing that Fonsègue hasn’t yet arrived,” resumed Massot ; “ he’s interested in what’s going on. However, he’s so cunning, that when he doesn’t behave as others do, one may be sure that he has his reasons for it. Do you know him ? ” And as Pierre gave a negative answer, Massot went on : “ Oh ! he’s a man of brains and real power — I speak with all freedom, you know, for I don’t possess the bump of veneration ; and, as for my editors, well, they’re the very puppets that I know the best and pick to pieces

with the most enjoyment. Fonsègue, also, is clearly designated in Sagnier's article. Moreover, he's one of Duvillard's usual clients. There can be no doubt that he took money, for he takes money in everything. Only he always protects himself, and takes it for reasons which may be acknowledged — as payment or commission on account of advertising, and so forth. And if I left him just now, looking, as it seemed to me, rather disturbed, and if he delays his arrival here to establish, as it were, a moral alibi, the truth must be that he has committed the first imprudent action in his life ”

Then Massot rattled on, telling all there was to tell about Fonsègue. He, too, came from the department of La Corrèze, and had quarrelled for life with Monferrand after some unknown underhand affairs. Formerly an advocate at Tulle, his ambition had been to conquer Paris; and he had really conquered it, thanks to his big morning newspaper, “*Le Globe*,” of which he was both founder and director. He now resided in a luxurious mansion in the Avenue du Bois de Boulogne, and no enterprise was launched but he carved himself a princely share in it. He had a genius for “business,” and employed his newspaper as a weapon to enable him to reign over the market. But how very carefully he had behaved, what long and skilful patience he had shown, before attaining to the reputation of a really serious man, who guided authoritatively the most virtuous and respected of the organs of the press! Though in reality he believed neither in God nor in Devil, he had made this newspaper the supporter of order, property, and family

ties ; and though he had become a Conservative Republican, since it was to his interest to be such, he had remained outwardly religious, affecting a Spiritualism which reassured the *bourgeoisie*. And amidst all his accepted power, to which others bowed, he nevertheless had one hand deep in every available money-bag.

“ Ah ! Monsieur l’Abbé,” said Massot, “ see to what journalism may lead a man. There you have Sagnier and Fonsègue. just compare them a bit. In reality they are birds of the same feather. each has a quill and uses it. But how different the systems and the results. Sagnier’s print is really a sewer which rolls him along and carries him to the cesspool ; while the other’s paper is certainly an example of the best journalism one can have, most carefully written, with a real literary flavour, a treat for readers of delicate minds, and an honour to the man who directs it. But at the bottom, good heavens ! in both cases the farce is precisely the same ! ”

Massot burst out laughing, well pleased with this final thrust. Then all at once : “ Ah ! here’s Fonsègue at last ! ” said he.

Quite at his ease, and still laughing, he forthwith introduced the priest. “ This is Monsieur l’Abbé Froment, my dear *patron*, who has been waiting more than twenty minutes for you — I’m just going to see what is happening inside. You know that Mège is interpellating the government. ”

The new comer started slightly. “ An interpellation ! ” said he. “ All right, all right, I’ll go to it. ”

Pierre was looking at him. He was about fifty years of age, short of stature, thin and active, still looking young without a grey hair in his black beard. He had sparkling eyes, too, but his mouth, said to be a terrible one, was hidden by his moustaches. And withal he looked a pleasant companion, full of wit to the tip of his little pointed nose, the nose of a sporting dog that is ever scenting game. "What can I do for you, Monsieur l'Abbé?" he inquired.

Then Pierre briefly presented his request, recounting his visit to Laveuve that morning, giving every heart-rending particular, and asking for the poor wretch's immediate admittance to the Asylum.

"Laveuve!" said the other, "but hasn't his affair been examined? Why, Duthil drew up a report on it, and things appeared to us of such a nature that we could not vote for the man's admittance."

But the priest insisted: "I assure you, monsieur, that your heart would have burst with compassion had you been with me this morning. It is revolting that an old man should be left in such frightful abandonment even for another hour. He must sleep at the Asylum to-night."

Fonsègue began to protest. "To-night! But it's impossible, altogether impossible! There are all sorts of indispensable formalities to be observed. And besides I alone cannot take such responsibility. I haven't the power. I am only the manager; all that I do is to execute the orders of the committee of lady patronesses."

"But it was precisely Baroness Duvillard who sent me to you, monsieur, telling me that you alone had

the necessary authority to grant immediate admittance in an exceptional case."

"Oh! it was the Baroness who sent you? Ah! that is just like her, incapable of coming to any decision herself, and far too desirous of her own quietude to accept any responsibility. Why is it that she wants me to have the worries? No, no, Monsieur l'Abbé, I certainly won't go against all our regulations; I won't give an order which would perhaps embroil me with all those ladies. You don't know them, but they become positively terrible directly they attend our meetings."

He was growing lively, defending himself with a jocular air, whilst in secret he was fully determined to do nothing. However, just then Duthil abruptly reappeared, darting along bareheaded, hastening from lobby to lobby to recruit absent members, particularly those who were interested in the grave debate at that moment beginning. "What, Fonsègue!" he cried, "are you still here? Go, go to your seat at once, it's serious!" And thereupon he disappeared.

His colleague evinced no haste, however. It was as if the suspicious affair which was impassioning the Chamber had no concern for him. And he still smiled, although a slight feverish quiver made him blink. "Excuse me, Monsieur l'Abbé," he said at last. "You see that my friends have need of me. I repeat to you that I can do absolutely nothing for your *protégé*."

But Pierre would not accept this reply as a final one. "No, no, monsieur," he rejoined, "go to your affairs, I will wait for you here. Don't come to a decision without full reflection. You are wanted, and

I feel that your mind is not sufficiently at liberty for you to listen to me properly. By-and-by, when you come back and give me your full attention, I am sure that you will grant me what I ask."

And, although Fonsègue, as he went off, repeated that he could not alter his decision, the priest stubbornly resolved to make him do so, and sat down on the bench again, prepared, if needful, to stay there till the evening. The Salle des Pas Perdus was now almost quite empty, and looked yet more frigid and mournful with its Laocoon and its Minerva, its bare commonplace walls like those of a railway-station waiting-room, between which all the scramble of the century passed, though apparently without even warming the lofty ceiling. Never had paler and more callous light entered by the large glazed doors, behind which one espied the little slumberous garden with its meagre, wintry lawns. And not an echo of the tempest of the sitting near at hand reached the spot; from the whole heavy pile there fell but death-like silence, and a covert quiver of distress that had come from far away, perhaps from the entire country.

It was that which now haunted Pierre's reverie. The whole ancient, envenomed sore spread out before his mind's eye, with its poison and virulence. Parliamentary rottenness had slowly increased till it had begun to attack society itself. Above all the low intrigues and the rush of personal ambition there certainly remained the loftier struggle of the contending principles, with history on the march, clearing the past away and seeking to bring more truth, justice, and happiness in the future. But in practice, if one

only considered the horrid daily *cuisine* of the sphere, what an unbridling of egotistical appetite one beheld, what an absorbing passion to strangle one's neighbour and triumph oneself alone! Among the various groups one found but an incessant battle for power and the satisfactions that it gives. "Left," "Right," "Catholics," "Republicans," "Socialists," the names given to the parties of twenty different shades, were simply labels classifying forms of the one burning thirst to rule and dominate. All questions could be reduced to a single one, that of knowing whether this man, that man, or that other man should hold France in his grasp, to enjoy it, and distribute its favours among his creatures. And the worst was that the outcome of the great parliamentary battles, the days and the weeks lost in setting this man in the place of that man, and that other man in the place of this man, was simply stagnation, for not one of the three men was better than his fellows, and there were but vague points of difference between them; in such wise that the new master bungled the very same work as the previous one had bungled, forgetful, perforce, of programmes and promises as soon as ever he began to reign.

However, Pierre's thoughts invincibly reverted to Laveuve, whom he had momentarily forgotten, but who now seized hold of him again with a quiver as of anger and death. Ah! what could it matter to that poor old wretch, dying of hunger on his bed of rags, whether Mège should overthrow Barroux's ministry, and whether a Vignon ministry should ascend to power or not! At that rate, a century, two centuries,



would be needed before there would be bread in the garrets where groan the lamed sons of labour, the old, broken-down beasts of burden. And behind Laveuve there appeared the whole army of misery, the whole multitude of the disinherited and the poor, who agonised and asked for justice whilst the Chamber, sitting in all pomp, grew furiously impassioned over the question as to whom the nation should belong to, as to who should devour it. Mire was flowing on in a broad stream, the hideous, bleeding, devouring sore displayed itself in all impudence, like some cancer which preys upon an organ and spreads to the heart. And what disgust, what nausea must such a spectacle inspire; and what a longing for the vengeful knife that would bring health and joy!

Pierre could not have told for how long he had been plunged in this reverie, when uproar again filled the hall. People were coming back, gesticulating and gathering in groups. And suddenly he heard little Massot exclaim near him. "Well, if it isn't down it's not much better off. I wouldn't give four sous for its chance of surviving."

He referred to the ministry, and began to recount the sitting to a fellow journalist who had just arrived. Mège had spoken very eloquently, with extraordinary fury of indignation against the rotten *bourgeoisie*, which rotted everything it touched; but, as usual, he had gone much too far, alarming the Chamber by his very violence. And so, when Barroux had ascended the tribune to ask for a month's adjournment of the interpellation, he had merely had occasion to wax indignant, in all sincerity be it said, full of lofty

anger that such infamous campaigns should be carried on by a certain portion of the press. Were the shameful Panama scandals about to be renewed? Were the national representatives going to let themselves be intimidated by fresh threats of denunciation? It was the Republic itself which its adversaries were seeking to submerge beneath a flood of abominations. No, no, the hour had come for one to collect one's thoughts, and work in quietude without allowing those who hungered for scandal to disturb the public peace. And the Chamber, impressed by these words, fearing, too, lest the electorate should at last grow utterly weary of the continuous overflow of filth, had adjourned the interpellation to that day month. However, although Vignon had not personally intervened in the debate, the whole of his group had voted against the ministry, with the result that the latter had merely secured a majority of two votes — a mockery.

"But in that case they will resign," said somebody to Massot.

"Yes, so it's rumoured. But Barroux is very tenacious. At all events if they show any obstinacy they will be down before a week is over, particularly as Sagnier, who is quite furious, declares that he will publish the list of names to-morrow."

Just then, indeed, Barroux and Monferrand were seen to pass, hastening along with thoughtful, busy mien, and followed by their anxious clients. It was said that the whole Cabinet was about to assemble to consider the position and come to a decision. And then Vignon, in his turn, reappeared amidst a stream of friends. He, for his part, was radiant, with a joy

which he sought to conceal, calming his friends in his desire not to cry victory too soon. However, the eyes of the band glittered, like those of a pack of hounds when the moment draws near for the offal of the quarry to be distributed. And even Mège also looked triumphant. He had all but overthrown the ministry. That made another one that was worn out, and by-and-by he would wear out Vignon's, and at last govern in his turn.

"The devil!" muttered little Massot, "Chaigneux and Duthil look like whipped dogs. And see, there's nobody who is worth the governor. Just look at him, how superb he is, that Fonsègue! But good by, I must now be off!"

Then he shook hands with his brother journalist unwilling as he was to remain any longer, although the sitting still continued, some bill of public importance again being debated before the rows of empty seats.

Chaigneux, with his desolate mien, had gone to lean against the pedestal of the high figure of Minerva; and never before had he been more bowed down by his needy distress, the everlasting anguish of his ill-luck. On the other hand, Duthil, in spite of everything, was perorating in the centre of a group with an affectation of scoffing unconcern; nevertheless nervous twitches made his nose pucker and distorted his mouth, while the whole of his handsome face was becoming moist with fear. And even as Massot had said, there really was only Fonsègue who showed composure and bravery, ever the same with his restless little figure, and his eyes beaming with wit,

though at times they were just faintly clouded by a shadow of uneasiness

Pierre had risen to renew his request; but Fonsègue forestalled him, vivaciously exclaiming "No, no, Monsieur l'Abbé, I repeat that I cannot take on myself such an infraction of our rules. There was an inquiry, and a decision was arrived at. How would you have me over-rule it?"

"Monsieur," said the priest, in a tone of deep grief, "it is a question of an old man who is hungry and cold, and in danger of death if he be not succoured."

With a despairing gesture, the director of "Le Globe" seemed to take the very walls as witnesses of his powerlessness. No doubt he feared some nasty affair for his newspaper, in which he had abused the Invalids of Labour enterprise as an electoral weapon. Perhaps, too, the secret terror into which the sitting of the Chamber had just thrown him was hardening his heart. "I can do nothing," he repeated. "But naturally I don't ask better than to have my hands forced by the ladies of the Committee. You already have the support of the Baroness Duvalard, secure that of some others."

Pierre, who was determined to fight on to the very end, saw in this suggestion a supreme chance. "I know the Countess de Quinsac," he said, "I can go to see her at once."

"Quite so! an excellent idea, the Countess de Quinsac! Take a cab and go to see the Princess de Harn as well. She bestirs herself a great deal, and is becoming very influential. Secure the approval of these ladies, go back to the Baroness's at seven, get a letter

from her to cover me, and then call on me at the office of my paper. That done, your man shall sleep at the Asylum at nine o'clock!"

He evinced in speaking a kind of joyous good nature, as though he no longer doubted of success now that he ran no risk of compromising himself. And great hope again came back to the priest. "Ah! thank you, monsieur," he said; "it is a work of salvation that you will accomplish."

"But you surely know that I ask nothing better. Ah! if we could only cure misery, prevent hunger and thirst by a mere word. However, make haste, you have not a minute to lose."

They shook hands, and Pierre at once tried to get out of the throng. This, however, was no easy task, for the various groups had grown larger as all the anger and anguish, roused by the recent debate, ebbed back there amid a confused tumult. It was as when a stone, cast into a pool, stirs the ooze below, and causes hidden, rotting things to rise once more to the surface. And Pierre had to bring his elbows into play and force a passage athwart the throng, betwixt the shivering cowardice of some, the insolent audacity of others, and the smirchings which sullied the greater number, given the contagion which inevitably prevailed. However, he carried away a fresh hope, and it seemed to him that if he should save a life, make but one man happy that day, it would be like a first instalment of redemption, a sign that a little forgiveness would be extended to the many follies and errors of that egotistical and all-devouring political world.

On reaching the vestibule a final incident detained

him for a moment longer. Some commotion prevailed there following upon a quarrel between a man and an usher, the latter of whom had prevented the former from entering on finding that the admission ticket which he tendered was an old one, with its original date scratched out. The man, very rough at the outset, had then refrained from insisting, as if indeed sudden timidity had come upon him. And in this ill-dressed fellow Pierre was astonished to recognise Salvat, the journeyman engineer, whom he had seen going off in search of work that same morning. This time it was certainly he, tall, thin and ravaged, with dreamy yet flaming eyes, which set his pale starveling's face aglow. He no longer carried his tool-bag; his ragged jacket was buttoned up and distended on the left side by something that he carried in a pocket, doubtless some hunk of bread. And on being repulsed by the ushers, he walked away, taking the Concorde bridge, slowly, as if chancewise, like a man who knows not whither he is going.

## IV

### SOCIAL SIDELIGHTS

IN her old faded drawing-room—a Louis Seize *salon* with grey woodwork—the Countess de Quinsac sat near the chimney-piece in her accustomed place. She was singularly like her son, with a long and noble face, her chin somewhat stern, but her eyes still beautiful beneath her fine snowy hair, which was arranged in the antiquated style of her youth. And whatever her haughty coldness, she knew how to be amiable, with perfect, kindly graciousness.

Slightly waving her hand after a long silence, she resumed, addressing herself to the Marquis de Morigny, who sat on the other side of the chimney, where for long years he had always taken the same armchair. “Ah! you are right, my friend, Providence has left us here forgotten, in a most abominable epoch.”

“Yes, we passed by the side of happiness and missed it,” the Marquis slowly replied, “and it was your fault, and doubtless mine as well.”

Smiling sadly, she stopped him with another wave of her hand. And the silence fell once more; not a sound from the streets reached that gloomy ground floor at the rear of the courtyard of an old mansion in the Rue St. Dominique, almost at the corner of the Rue de Bourgogne.

The Marquis was an old man of seventy-five, nine years older than the Countess. Short and thin though he was, he none the less had a distinguished air, with his clean-shaven face, furrowed by deep, aristocratic wrinkles. He belonged to one of the most ancient families of France, and remained one of the last hopeless Legitimists, of very pure and lofty views, zealously keeping his faith to the dead monarchy amidst the downfall of everything. His fortune, still estimated at several millions of francs, remained, as it were, in a state of stagnation, through his refusal to invest it in any of the enterprises of the century. It was known that in all discretion he had loved the Countess, even when M. de Quinsac was alive, and had, moreover, offered marriage after the latter's death, at the time when the widow had sought a refuge on that damp ground floor with merely an income of some 15,000 francs, saved with great difficulty from the wreck of the family fortune. But she, who adored her son Gérard, then in his tenth year, and of delicate health, had sacrificed everything to the boy from a kind of maternal chasteness and a superstitious fear that she might lose him should she set another affection and another duty in her life. And the Marquis, while bowing to her decision, had continued to worship her with his whole soul, ever paying his court as on the first evening when he had seen her, still gallant and faithful after a quarter of a century had passed. There had never been anything between them, not even the exchange of a kiss.

Seeing how sad she looked, he feared that he might



have displeased her, and so he asked "I should have liked to render you happy, but I didn't know how, and the fault can certainly only rest with me. Is Gérard giving you any cause for anxiety?"

She shook her head, and then replied. "As long as things remain as they are we cannot complain of them, my friend, since we accepted them."

She referred to her son's culpable connection with Baroness Duvillard. She had ever shown much weakness with regard to that son whom she had had so much trouble to rear, for she alone knew what exhaustion, what racial collapse was hidden behind his proud bearing. She tolerated his idleness, the apathetic disgust which, man of pleasure that he was, had turned him from the profession of diplomacy as from that of arms. How many times had she not repaired his acts of folly and paid his petty debts, keeping silent concerning them, and refusing all pecuniary help from the Marquis, who no longer dared offer his millions, so stubbornly intent she was on living upon the remnants of her own fortune. And thus she had ended by closing her eyes to her son's scandalous love intrigue, divining in some measure how things had happened, through self-abandonment and lack of conscience — the man weak, unable to resume possession of himself, and the woman holding and retaining him. The Marquis, however, strangely enough, had only forgiven the intrigue on the day when Eve had allowed herself to be converted.

"You know, my friend, how good-natured Gérard is," the Countess resumed. "In that he both his strength and weakness. How would you have me

scold him when he weeps over it all with me? He will tire of that woman."

M. de Morigny wagged his head. "She is still very beautiful," said he "And then there's the daughter. It would be graver still if he were to marry her——"

"But the daughter's infirm?"

"Yes, and you know what would be said: A Quinsac marrying a monster for the sake of her millions."

This was their mutual terror. They knew everything that went on at the Duvillards, the affectionate friendship of the uncomely Camille and the handsome Gérard, the seeming idyll beneath which lurked the most awful of dramas. And they protested with all their indignation. "Oh! that, no, no, never!" the Countess declared. "My son in that family, no, I will never consent to it."

Just at that moment General de Bozonnet entered. He was much attached to his sister and came to keep her company on the days when she received, for the old circle had gradually dwindled down till now only a few faithful ones ventured into that grey gloomy *salon*, where one might have fancied oneself at thousands of leagues from present-day Paris. And forthwith, in order to enliven the room, he related that he had been to *déjeuner* at the Duvillards, and named the guests, Gérard among them. He knew that he pleased his sister by going to the banker's house whence he brought her news, a house, too, which he cleansed in some degree by conferring on it the great honour of his presence. And he himself in no wise felt bored there, for he had long been gained over to the century and showed himself of a very accommo-

dating disposition in everything that did not pertain to military art.

"That poor little Camille worships Gérard," said he; "she was devouring him with her eyes at table"

But M. de Morigny gravely intervened: "There lies the danger, a marriage would be absolutely monstrous from every point of view."

The General seemed astonished: "Why, pray? She isn't beautiful, but it's not only the beauties who marry! And there are her millions. However, our dear child would only have to put them to a good use. True, there is also the mother; but, *mon Dieu!* such things are so common nowadays in Paris society."

This revolted the Marquis, who made a gesture of utter disgust. What was the use of discussion when all collapsed? How could one answer a Bozonnet, the last surviving representative of such an illustrious family, when he reached such a point as to excuse the infamous morals that prevailed under the Republic; after denying his king, too, and serving the Empire, faithfully and passionately attaching himself to the fortunes and memory of Cæsar? However, the Countess also became indignant: "Oh! what are you saying, brother? I will never authorize such a scandal, I swore so only just now."

"Don't swear, sister," exclaimed the General; "for my part I should like to see our Gérard happy. That's all. And one must admit that he's not good for much. I can understand that he didn't go into the Army, for that profession is done for. But I do not so well understand why he did not enter the diplomatic profession, or accept some other occupation. It is very fine, no

doubt, to run down the present times and declare that a man of our sphere cannot possibly do any clean work in them. But, as a matter of fact, it is only idle fellows who still say that. And Gérard has but one excuse, his lack of aptitude, will and strength."

Tears had risen to the mother's eyes. She even trembled, well knowing how deceitful were appearances. a mere chill might carry her son off, however tall and strong he might look. And was he not indeed a symbol of that old-time aristocracy, still so lofty and proud in appearance, though at bottom it is but dust?

"Well," continued the General, "he's thirty-six now; he's constantly hanging on your hands, and he must make an end of it all."

However, the Countess silenced him and turned to the Marquis: "Let us put our confidence in God, my friend," said she. "He cannot but come to my help, for I have never willingly offended Him."

"Never!" replied the Marquis, who in that one word set an expression of all his grief, all his affection and worship for that woman whom he had adored for so many years.

But another faithful friend came in and the conversation changed. M. de Larombière, Vice-President of the Appeal Court, was an old man of seventy-five, thin, bald and clean shaven but for a pair of little white whiskers. And his grey eyes, compressed mouth and square and obstinate chin lent an expression of great austerity to his long face. The grief of his life was that, being afflicted with a somewhat childish lisp, he had never been able to make his full merits known when a public prosecutor, for he esteemed him-

self to be a great orator. And this secret worry rendered him morose. In him appeared an incarnation of that old royalist France which sulked and only served the Republic against its heart, that old stern magistracy which closed itself to all evolution, to all new views of things and beings. Of petty "gown" nobility, originally a Legitimist but now supporting Orleanism, he believed himself to be the one man of wisdom and logic in that *salon*, where he was very proud to meet the Marquis.

They talked of the last events; but with them political conversation was soon exhausted, amounting as it did to a mere bitter condemnation of men and occurrences, for all three were of one mind as to the abominations of the Republican *régime*. They themselves, however, were only ruins, the remnants of the old parties now all but utterly powerless. The Marquis for his part soared on high, yielding in nothing, ever faithful to the dead past; he was one of the last representatives of that lofty obstinate *noblesse* which dies when it finds itself without an effort to escape its fate. The judge, who at least had a pretender living, relied on a miracle, and demonstrated the necessity for one if France were not to sink into the depths of misfortune and completely disappear. And as for the General, all that he regretted of the two Empires was their great wars; he left the faint hope of a Bonapartist restoration on one side to declare that by not contenting itself with the Imperial military system, and by substituting thereto obligatory service, the nation in arms, the Republic had killed both warfare and the country.

When the Countess's one man-servant came to ask her if she would consent to receive Abbé Froment she seemed somewhat surprised. "What can he want of me? Show him in," she said.

She was very pious, and having met Pierre in connection with various charitable enterprises, she had been touched by his zeal as well as by the saintly reputation which he owed to his Neuilly parishioners.

He, absorbed by his fever, felt intimidated directly he crossed the threshold. He could at first distinguish nothing, but fancied he was entering some place of mourning, a shadowy spot where human forms seemed to melt away, and voices were never raised above a whisper. Then, on perceiving the persons present, he felt yet more out of his element, for they seemed so sad, so far removed from the world whence he had just come, and whither he was about to return. And when the Countess had made him sit down beside her in front of the chimney-piece, it was in a low voice that he told her the lamentable story of Laveuve, and asked her support to secure the man's admittance to the Asylum for the Invalids of Labour.

"Ah! yes," said she, "that enterprise which my son wished me to belong to. But, Monsieur l'Abbé, I have never once attended the Committee meetings. So how could I intervene, having assuredly no influence whatever?"

Again had the figures of Eve and Gérard arisen before her, for it was at this asylum that the pair had first met. And influenced by her sorrowful maternal love she was already weakening, although it was regretfully that she had lent her name to one of those

noisy charitable enterprises, which people abused to further their selfish interests in a manner she condemned.

"But, madame," Pierre insisted, "it is a question of a poor starving old man. I implore you to be compassionate."

Although the priest had spoken in a low voice the General drew near. "It's for your old revolutionary that you are running about, is it not," said he. "Didn't you succeed with the manager, then? The fact is that it's difficult to feel any pity for fellows who, if they were the masters, would, as they themselves say, sweep us all away."

M. de Larombière jerked his chin approvingly. For some time past he had been haunted by the Anarchist peril. But Pierre, distressed and quivering, again began to plead his cause. He spoke of all the frightful misery, the homes where there was no food, the women and children shivering with cold, and the fathers scouring muddy, wintry Paris in search of a bit of bread. All that he asked for was a line on a visiting card, a kindly word from the Countess, which he would at once carry to Baroness Duvillard to prevail on her to set the regulations aside. And his words fell one by one, tremulous with stifled tears, in that mournful *salon*, like sounds from afar, dying away in a dead world where there was no echo left.

Madame de Quinsac turned towards M. de Morigny, but he seemed to take no interest in it all. He was gazing fixedly at the fire, with the haughty air of a stranger who was indifferent to the things and beings in whose midst an error of time compelled him to live.

But feeling that the glance of the woman he worshipped was fixed upon him he raised his head; and then their eyes met for a moment with an expression of infinite gentleness, the mournful gentleness of their heroic love

"*Mon Dieu!*" said she, "I know your merits, Monsieur l'Abbé, and I won't refuse my help to one of your good works."

Then she went off for a moment, and returned with a card on which she had written that she supported with all her heart Monsieur l'Abbé Froment in the steps he was taking. And he thanked her and went off delighted, as if he carried yet a fresh hope of salvation from that drawing-room where, as he retired, gloom and silence once more seemed to fall on that old lady and her last faithful friends gathered around the fire, last relics of a world that was soon to disappear.

Once outside, Pierre joyfully climbed into his cab again, after giving the Princess de Harn's address in the Avenue Kléber. If he could also obtain her approval he would no longer doubt of success. However, there was such a crush on the Concorde bridge, that the driver had to walk his horse. And, on the foot-pavement, Pierre again saw Duthil, who, with a cigar between his lips, was smiling at the crowd, with his amiable bird-like heedlessness, happy as he felt at finding the pavement dry and the sky blue on leaving that worrying sitting of the Chamber. Seeing how gay and triumphant he looked, a sudden inspiration came to the priest, who said to himself that he ought to win over this young man, whose report had had



such a disastrous effect. As it happened, the cab having been compelled to stop altogether, the deputy had just recognized him and was smiling at him.

"Where are you going, Monsieur Duthil?" Pierre asked.

"Close by, in the Champs Elysées."

"I'm going that way, and, as I should much like to speak to you for a moment, it would be very kind of you to take a seat beside me. I will set you down wherever you like."

"Willingly, Monsieur l'Abbé. It won't inconvenience you if I finish my cigar?"

"Oh! not at all."

The cab found its way out of the crush, crossed the Place de la Concorde and began to ascend the Champs Elysées. And Pierre, reflecting that he had very few minutes before him, at once attacked Duthil, quite ready for any effort to convince him. He remembered what a *sortie* the young deputy had made against Laveuve at the Baron's; and thus he was astonished to hear him interrupt and say quite pleasantly, enlivened as he seemed by the bright sun which was again beginning to shine: "Ah, yes! your old drunkard! So you didn't settle his business with Fonsègue? And what is it you want? To have him admitted to-day? Well, you know I don't oppose it?"

"But there's your report."

"My report, oh, my report! But questions change according to the way one looks at them. And if you are so anxious about your Laveuve I won't refuse to help you."

Pierre looked at him in astonishment, at bottom extremely well pleased. And there was no further necessity even for him to speak.

"You didn't take the matter in hand properly," continued Duthil, leaning forward with a confidential air. "It's the Baron who's the master at home, for reasons which you may divine, which you may very likely know. The Baroness does all that he asks without even discussing the point; and this morning, instead of starting on a lot of useless visits, you only had to gain his support, particularly as he seemed to be very well disposed. And she would then have given way immediately." Duthil began to laugh. "And so," he continued, "do you know what I'll do? Well, I'll gain the Baron over to your cause. Yes, I am this moment going to a house where he is, where one is certain to find him every day at this time." Then he laughed more loudly. "And perhaps you are not ignorant of it, Monsieur l'Abbé. When he is there you may be certain he never gives a refusal. I promise you I'll make him swear that he will compel his wife to grant your man admission this very evening. Only it will, perhaps, be rather late."

Then all at once, as if struck by a fresh idea, Duthil went on: "But why shouldn't you come with me? You secure a line from the Baron, and thereupon, without losing a minute, you go in search of the Baroness. Ah! yes, the house embarrasses you a little, I understand it. Would you like to see only the Baron there? You can wait for him in a little *salon* downstairs; I will bring him to you."

This proposal made Duthil altogether merry, but Pierre, quite scared, hesitated at the idea of thus going to Silviane d'Aulnay's. It was hardly a place for him. However, to achieve his purpose, he would have descended into the very dwelling of the fiend, and had already done so sometimes with Abbé Rose, when there was hope of assuaging wretchedness. So he turned to Duthil and consented to accompany him.

Silviane d'Aulnay's little mansion, a very luxurious one, displaying, too, so to say, the luxury of a temple, refined but suggestive of gallantry, stood in the Avenue d'Antin, near the Champs Elysées. The inmate of this sanctuary, where the orfrays of old dalmaticas glittered in the mauve reflections from the windows of stained-glass, had just completed her twenty-fifth year. Short and slim she was, of an adorable, dark beauty, and all Paris was acquainted with her delicious, virginal countenance of a gentle oval, her delicate nose, her little mouth, her candid cheeks and artless chin, above all which she wore her black hair in thick, heavy bands, which hid her low brow. Her notoriety was due precisely to her pretty air of astonishment, the infinite purity of her blue eyes, the whole expression of chaste innocence which she assumed when it so pleased her, an expression which contrasted powerfully with her true nature, shameless creature that she really was, of the most monstrous, confessed, and openly-displayed perversity; such as, in fact, often spring up from the rotting soil of great cities. Extraordinary things were related about Sil-

viane's tastes and fancies. Some said that she was a door-keeper's, others a doctor's, daughter. In any case she had managed to acquire instruction and manners, for when occasion required she lacked neither wit, nor style, nor deportment. She had been rolling through the theatres for ten years or so, applauded for her beauty's sake, and she had even ended by obtaining some pretty little successes in such parts as those of very pure young girls or loving and persecuted young women. Since there had been a question, though, of her entering the Comédie Française to play the rôle of Pauline in "Polyeucte," some people had waxed indignant and others had roared with laughter, so ridiculous did the idea appear, so outrageous for the majesty of classic tragedy. She, however, quiet and stubborn, wished this thing to be, was resolved that it should be, certain as she was that she would secure it, insolent like a creature to whom men had never yet been able to refuse anything.

That day, at three o'clock, Gérard de Quinsac, not knowing how to kill the time pending the appointment he had given Eve in the Rue Matignon, had thought of calling at Silviane's, which was in the neighbourhood. She was an old caprice of his, and even nowadays he would sometimes linger at the little mansion if its pretty mistress felt bored. But he had this time found her in a fury; and, reclining in one of the deep armchairs of the *salon* where "old gold" formed the predominant colour, he was listening to her complaints. She, standing in a white gown, white indeed from head to foot like Eve herself

at the *déjeuner*, was speaking passionately, and fast convincing the young man, who, won over by so much youth and beauty, unconsciously compared her to his other flame, weary already of his coming assignation, and so mastered by supineness, both moral and physical, that he would have preferred to remain all day in the depths of that armchair

"You hear me, Gérard!" she at last exclaimed, "I'll have nothing whatever to do with him, unless he brings me my nomination"

Just then Baron Duvillard came in, and forthwith she changed to ice and received him like some sorely offended young queen who awaits an explanation; whilst he, who foresaw the storm and brought moreover disastrous tidings, forced a smile, though very ill at ease. She was the stain, the blemish attaching to that man who was yet so sturdy and so powerful amidst the general decline of his race. And she was also the beginning of justice and punishment, taking all his piled-up gold from him by the handful, and by her cruelty avenging those who shivered and who starved. And it was pitiful to see that feared and flattered man, beneath whom states and governments trembled, here turn pale with anxiety, bend low in all humility, and relapse into the senile, lisping infancy of acute passion.

"Ah! my dear friend," said he, "if you only knew how I have been rushing about. I had a lot of worrying business, some contractors to see, a big advertisement affair to settle, and I feared that I should never be able to come and kiss your hand."

He kissed it, but she let her arm fall, coldly, in-

differently, contenting herself with looking at him, waiting for what he might have to say to her, and embarrassing him to such a point that he began to perspire and stammer, unable to express himself "Of course," he began, "I also thought of you, and went to the Fine Arts Office, where I had received a positive promise Oh! they are still very much in your favour at the Fine Arts Office! Only, just fancy, it's that idiot of a minister, that Taboureau,<sup>1</sup> an old professor from the provinces who knows nothing about our Paris, that has expressly opposed your nomination, saying that as long as he is in office you shall not appear at the Comédie."

Erect and rigid, she spoke but two words: "And then?"

"And then—well, my dear, what would you have me do? One can't after all overthrow a ministry to enable you to play the part of Pauline."

"Why not?"

He pretended to laugh, but his blood rushed to his face, and the whole of his sturdy figure quivered with anguish. "Come, my little Silviane," said he, "don't be obstinate You can be so nice when you choose Give up the idea of that *début*. You, yourself, would risk a great deal in it, for what would be your worries if you were to fail? You would weep

<sup>1</sup> Taboureau is previously described as Minister of Public Instruction It should be pointed out, however, that although under the present Republic the Ministries of Public Instruction and Fine Arts have occasionally been distinct departments, at other times they have been united, one minister, as in Taboureau's case, having charge of both.—*Trans.*

all the tears in your body. And besides, you can ask me for so many other things which I should be so happy to give you. Come now, at once, make a wish and I will gratify it immediately."

In a frolicsome way he sought to take her hand again. But she drew back with an air of much dignity. "No, you hear me, my dear fellow, I will have nothing whatever to do with you—nothing, so long as I don't play Pauline."

He understood her fully, and he knew her well enough to realise how rigorously she would treat him. Only a kind of grunt came from his contracted throat, though he still tried to treat the matter in a jesting way. "Isn't she bad-tempered to-day!" he resumed at last, turning towards Gérard. "What have you done to her that I find her in such a state?"

But the young man, who kept very quiet for fear lest he himself might be bespattered in the course of the dispute, continued to stretch himself out in a languid way and gave no answer.

But Silviane's anger burst forth. "What has he done to me? He has pitied me for being at the mercy of such a man as you—so egotistical, so insensible to the insults heaped upon me. Ought you not to be the first to bound with indignation? Ought you not to have exacted my admittance to the Comédie as a reparation for the insult? For, after all, it is a defeat for you; if I'm considered unworthy, you are struck at the same time as I am. And so I'm a drab, eh? Say at once that I'm a creature to be driven away from all respectable houses."

She went on in this style, coming at last to vile

words, the abominable words which, in moments of anger, always ended by returning to her innocent-looking lips. The Baron, who well knew that a syllable from him would only increase the foulness of the overflow, vainly turned an imploring glance on the Count to solicit his intervention. Gérard, with his keen desire for peace and quietness, often brought about a reconciliation, but this time he did not stir, feeling too lazy and sleepy to interfere. And Silviane all at once came to a finish, repeating her trenchant, severing words: "Well, manage as you can, secure my *début*, or I'll have nothing more to do with you, nothing!"

"All right! all right!" Duvillard at last murmured, sneering, but in despair, "we'll arrange it all."

However, at that moment a servant came in to say that M. Duthil was downstairs and wished to speak to the Baron in the smoking-room. Duvillard was astonished at this, for Duthil usually came up as though the house were his own. Then he reflected that the deputy had doubtless brought him some serious news from the Chamber which he wished to impart to him confidentially at once. So he followed the servant, leaving Gérard and Silviane together.

In the smoking-room, an apartment communicating with the hall by a wide bay, the curtain of which was drawn up, Pierre stood with his companion, waiting and glancing curiously around him. What particularly struck him was the almost religious solemnness of the entrance, the heavy hangings, the mystic gleams of the stained-glass, the old furniture steeped in chapel-like gloom amidst scattered perfumes of myrrh



and incense Duthil, who was still very gay, tapped a low divan with his cane and said: "She has a nicely-furnished house, eh? Oh! she knows how to look after her interests"

Then the Baron came in, still quite upset and anxious. And without even perceiving the priest, desirous as he was of tidings, he began. "Well, what did they do? Is there some very bad news, then?"

"Mège interpellated and applied for a declaration of urgency so as to overthrow Barroux. You can imagine what his speech was."

"Yes, yes, against the *bourgeois*, against me, against you. It's always the same thing—— And then?"

"Then— well, urgency wasn't voted, but, in spite of a very fine defence, Barroux only secured a majority of two votes."

"Two votes, the devil! Then he's down, and we shall have a Vignon ministry next week."

"That's what everybody said in the lobbies."

The Baron frowned, as if he were estimating what good or evil might result to the world from such a change. Then, with a gesture of displeasure, he said: "A Vignon ministry! The devil! that would hardly be any better. Those young democrats pretend to be virtuous, and a Vignon ministry wouldn't admit Silviane to the Comédie."

This, at first, was his only thought in presence of the crisis which made the political world tremble. And so the deputy could not refrain from referring to his own anxiety. "Well, and we others, what is our position in it all?"

This brought Duvillard back to the situation. With

a fresh gesture, this time a superbly proud one, he expressed his full and impudent confidence. "We others, why we remain as we are; we've never been in peril, I imagine Oh! I am quite at ease. Sagnier can publish his famous list if it amuses him to do so. If we haven't long since bought Sagnier and his list, it's because Barroux is a thoroughly honest man, and for my part I don't care to throw money out of the window—I repeat to you that we fear nothing"

Then, as he at last recognised Abbé Froment, who had remained in the shade, Duthil explained what service the priest desired of him. And Duvillard, in his state of emotion, his heart still rent by Silviane's sternness, must have felt a covert hope that a good action might bring him luck; so he at once consented to intervene in favour of Laveuve's admission. Taking a card and a pencil from his pocket-book he drew near to the window "Oh! whatever you desire, Monsieur l'Abbé," he said, "I shall be very happy to participate in this good work. Here, this is what I have written: 'My dear, please do what M. l'Abbé Froment solicits in favour of this unfortunate man, since our friend Fonsègue only awaits a word from you to take proper steps.'"

At this moment through the open bay Pierre caught sight of Gérard, whom Silviane, calm once more, and inquisitive no doubt to know why Duthil had called, was escorting into the hall. And the sight of the young woman filled him with astonishment, so simple and gentle did she seem to him, full of the immaculate candour of a virgin. Never had he dreamt of a

lily of more unobtrusive yet delicious bloom in the whole garden of innocence

"Now," continued Duvillard, "if you wish to hand this card to my wife at once, you must go to the Princess de Harn's, where there is a *matinée* ——"

"I was going there, Monsieur le Baron."

"Very good. You will certainly find my wife there, she is to take the children there." Then he paused, for he too had just seen Gérard; and he called him "I say, Gérard, my wife said that she was going to that *matinée*, didn't she? You feel sure—don't you?—that Monsieur l'Abbé will find her there?"

Although the young man was then going to the Rue Matignon, there to wait for Eve, it was in the most natural manner possible that he replied: "If Monsieur l'Abbé makes haste, I think he will find her there, for she was certainly going there before trying on a corsage at Salmon's."

Then he kissed Silviane's hand, and went off with the air of a handsome, indolent man, who knows no malice, and is even weary of pleasure.

Pierre, feeling rather embarrassed, was obliged to let Duvillard introduce him to the mistress of the house. He bowed in silence, whilst she, likewise silent, returned his bow with modest reserve, the tact appropriate to the occasion, such as no *ingénue*, even at the Comédie, was then capable of. And while the Baron accompanied the priest to the door, she returned to the *salon* with Duthil, who was scarcely screened by the door-curtain before he passed his arm round her waist.

When Pierre, who at last felt confident of success,

found himself, still in his cab, in front of the Princess de Harn's mansion in the Avenue Kléber, he suddenly relapsed into great embarrassment. The avenue was crowded with carriages brought thither by the musical *matinée*, and such a throng of arriving guests pressed round the entrance, decorated with a kind of tent with scallopings of red velvet, that he deemed the house unapproachable. How could he manage to get in? And how in his cassock could he reach the Princess, and ask for a minute's conversation with Baroness Duvillard? Amidst all his feverishness he had not thought of these difficulties. However, he was approaching the door on foot, asking himself how he might glide unperceived through the throng, when the sound of a merry voice made him turn: "What, Monsieur l'Abbé! Is it possible! So now I find you here!"

It was little Massot who spoke. He went everywhere, witnessed ten sights a day, — a parliamentary sitting, a funeral, a wedding, any festive or mourning scene, — when he wanted a good subject for an article. "What! Monsieur l'Abbé," he resumed, "and so you have come to our amiable Princess's to see the Mauritians dance!"

He was jesting, for the so-called Mauritians were simply six Spanish dancing-girls, who by the sensuality of their performance were then making all Paris rush to the Folies-Bergère. For drawing-room entertainments these girls reserved yet more indecorous dances — dances of such a character indeed that they would certainly not have been allowed in a theatre. And the *beau monde* rushed to see them at the houses

of the bolder lady-entertainers, the eccentric and foreign ones like the Princess, who in order to draw society recoiled from no "attraction."

But when Pierre had explained to little Massot that he was still running about on the same business, the journalist obligingly offered to pilot him. He knew the house, obtained admittance by a back door, and brought Pierre along a passage into a corner of the hall, near the very entrance of the grand drawing-room. Lofty green plants decorated this hall, and in the spot selected Pierre was virtually hidden. "Don't stir, my dear Abbé," said Massot, "I will try to ferret out the Princess for you. And you shall know if Baroness Duvillard has already arrived."

What surprised Pierre was that every window-shutter of the mansion was closed, every chink stopped up so that daylight might not enter, and that every room flared with electric lamps, an illumination of supernatural intensity. The heat was already very great, the atmosphere heavy with a violent perfume of flowers and *odore di femina*. And to Pierre, who felt both blinded and stifled, it seemed as if he were entering one of those luxurious, unearthly Dens of the Flesh such as the pleasure-world of Paris conjures from dreamland. By rising on tiptoes, as the drawing-room entrance was wide open, he could distinguish the backs of the women who were already seated, rows of necks crowned with fair or dark hair. The Mauritanians were doubtless executing their first dance. He did not see them, but he could divine the lascivious passion of the dance from the quiver of all those women's necks, which swayed as beneath a

great gust of wind. Then laughter arose and a tempest of bravos, quite a tumult of enjoyment.

"I can't put my hand on the Princess; you must wait a little," Massot returned to say. "I met Janzen and he promised to bring her to me. Don't you know Janzen?"

Then, in part because his profession willed it, and in part for pleasure's sake, he began to gossip. The Princess was a good friend of his. He had described her first *soirée* during the previous year, when she had made her *début* at that mansion on her arrival in Paris. He knew the real truth about her so far as it could be known. Rich? yes, perhaps she was, for she spent enormous sums. Married she must have been, and to a real prince, too; no doubt she was still married to him, in spite of her story of widowhood. Indeed, it seemed certain that her husband, who was as handsome as an archangel, was travelling about with a vocalist. As for having a bee in her bonnet that was beyond discussion, as clear as noonday. Whilst showing much intelligence, she constantly and suddenly shifted. Incapable of any prolonged effort, she went from one thing that had awakened her curiosity to another, never attaching herself anywhere. After ardently busying herself with painting, she had lately become impassioned for chemistry, and was now letting poetry master her.

"And so you don't know Janzen," continued Massot. "It was he who threw her into chemistry, into the study of explosives especially, for, as you may imagine, the only interest in chemistry for her is its connection with Anarchism. She, I think, is really an

Austrian, though one must always doubt anything she herself says. As for Janzen, he calls himself a Russian, but he's probably German. Oh! he's the most unobtrusive, enigmatical man in the world, without a home, perhaps without a name—a terrible fellow with an unknown past. I myself hold proofs which make me think that he took part in that frightful crime at Barcelona. At all events, for nearly a year now I've been meeting him in Paris, where the police no doubt are watching him. And nothing can rid me of the idea that he merely consented to become our lunatic Princess's lover in order to throw the detectives off the scent. He affects to live in the midst of *fêtes*, and he has introduced to the house some extraordinary people, Anarchists of all nationalities and all colours—for instance, one Raphanel, that fat, jovial little man yonder, a Frenchman he is, and his companions would do well to mistrust him. Then there's a Bergaz, a Spaniard, I think, an obscure jobber at the Bourse, whose sensual, blobber-lipped mouth is so disquieting. And there are others and others, adventurers and bandits from the four corners of the earth! . . . Ah! the foreign colonies of our Parisian pleasure-world! There are a few spotless fine names, a few real great fortunes among them, but as for the rest, ah! what a herd!"

Rosemonde's own drawing-room was summed up in those words: resounding titles, real millionaires, then, down below, the most extravagant medley of international imposture and turpitude. And Pierre thought of that internationalism, that cosmopolitanism, that flight of foreigners which, ever denser and denser,

swooped down upon Paris. Most certainly it came thither to enjoy it, as to a city of adventure and delight, and it helped to rot it a little more. Was it then a necessary thing, that decomposition of the great cities which have governed the world, that affluxion of every passion, every desire, every gratification, that accumulation of reeking soil from all parts of the world, there where, in beauty and intelligence, blooms the flower of civilisation?

However, Janzen appeared, a tall, thin fellow of about thirty, very fair with grey, pale, harsh eyes, and a pointed beard and flowing curly hair which elongated his livid, cloudy face. He spoke indifferent French in a low voice and without a gesture. And he declared that the Princess could not be found; he had looked for her everywhere. Possibly, if somebody had displeased her, she had shut herself up in her room and gone to bed, leaving her guests to amuse themselves in all freedom in whatever way they might choose.

"Why, but here she is!" suddenly said Massot.

Rosemonde was indeed there, in the vestibule, watching the door as if she expected somebody. Short, slight, and strange rather than pretty, with her delicate face, her sea-green eyes, her small quivering nose, her rather large and over-ruddy mouth, which was parted so that one could see her superb teeth, she that day wore a sky-blue gown spangled with silver; and she had silver bracelets on her arms and a silver circlet in her pale brown hair, which rained down in curls and frizzy, straggling locks as though waving in a perpetual breeze.



"Oh! whatever you desire, Monsieur l'Abbé," she said to Pierre as soon as she knew his business. "If they don't take your old man in at our asylum, send him to me, I'll take him, I will; I will sleep him somewhere here"

Still, she remained disturbed, and continually glanced towards the door. And on the priest asking if Baroness Duvillard had yet arrived, "Why no!" she cried, "and I am much surprised at it. She is to bring her son and daughter. Yesterday, Hyacinthe positively promised me that he would come"

There lay her new caprice. If her passion for chemistry was giving way to a budding taste for decadent, symbolical verse, it was because one evening, whilst discussing Occultism with Hyacinthe, she had discovered an extraordinary beauty in him. the astral beauty of Nero's wandering soul! At least, said she, the signs of it were certain.

And all at once she quitted Pierre: "Ah, at last!" she cried, feeling relieved and happy. Then she darted forward: Hyacinthe was coming in with his sister Camille.

On the very threshold, however, he had just met the friend on whose account he was there, young Lord George Eldrett, a pale and languid stripling with the hair of a girl; and he scarcely condescended to notice the tender greeting of Rosemonde, for he professed to regard woman as an impure and degrading creature. Distressed by such coldness, she followed the two young men, returning in their rear into the reeking, blinding furnace of the drawing-room.

Massot, however, had been obliging enough to stop Camille and bring her to Pierre, who at the first words they exchanged relapsed into despair. "What, mademoiselle, has not madame your mother accompanied you here?"

The girl, clad according to her wont in a dark gown, this time of peacock-blue, was nervous, with wicked eyes and sibilant voice. And as she ragefully drew up her little figure, her deformity, her left shoulder higher than the right one, became more apparent than ever. "No," she rejoined, "she was unable. She had something to try on at her dressmaker's. We stopped too long at the Exposition du Lis, and she requested us to set her down at Salmon's door on our way here."

It was Camille herself who had skilfully prolonged the visit to the art show, still hoping to prevent her mother from meeting Gérard. And her rage arose from the ease with which her mother had got rid of her, thanks to that falsehood of having something to try on.

"But," ingenuously said Pierre, "if I went at once to this person Salmon, I might perhaps be able to send up my card."

Camille gave a shrill laugh, so funny did the idea appear to her. Then she retorted: "Oh! who knows if you would still find her there? She had another pressing appointment, and is no doubt already keeping it!"

"Well, then, I will wait for her here. She will surely come to fetch you, will she not?"

"Fetch us? Oh no! since I tell you that she has

other important affairs to attend to. The carriage will take us home alone, my brother and I."

Increasing bitterness was infecting the girl's pain-fraught irony. Did he not understand her then, that priest who asked such naive questions which were like dagger-thrusts in her heart? Yet he must know, since everybody knew the truth.

"Ah! how worried I am," Pierre resumed, so grieved indeed that tears almost came to his eyes. "It's still on account of that poor man about whom I have been busying myself since this morning. I have a line from your father, and Monsieur Gérard told me ——" But at this point he paused in confusion, and amidst all his thoughtlessness of the world, absorbed as he was in the one passion of charity, he suddenly divined the truth. "Yes," he added mechanically, "I just now saw your father again with Monsieur de Quinsac."

"I know, I know," replied Camille, with the suffering yet scoffing air of a girl who is ignorant of nothing. "Well, Monsieur l'Abbé, if you have a line from papa for mamma, you must wait till mamma has finished her business. You might come to the house about six o'clock, but I doubt if you'll find her there, as she may well be detained."

While Camille thus spoke, her murderous eyes glistened, and each word she uttered, simple as it seemed, became instinct with ferocity, as if it were a knife, which she would have liked to plunge into her mother's breast. In all certainty she had never before hated her mother to such a point as this in her envy of her beauty and her happiness in being loved.

And the irony which poured from the girl's virgin lips, before that simple priest, was like a flood of mire with which she sought to submerge her rival.

Just then, however, Rosemonde came back again, feverish and flurried as usual. And she led Camille away "Ah, my dear, make haste. They are extraordinary, delightful, intoxicating!"

Janzen and little Massot also followed the Princess. All the men hastened from the adjoining rooms, scrambled and plunged into the *salon* at the news that the Mauritians had again begun to dance. That time it must have been the frantic, lascivious gallop that Paris whispered about, for Pierre saw the rows of necks and heads, now fair, now dark, wave and quiver as beneath a violent wind. With every window-shutter closed, the conflagration of the electric lamps turned the place into a perfect brazier, reeking with human effluvia. And there came a spell of rapture, fresh laughter and bravos, all the delight of an overflowing orgy.

When Pierre again found himself on the footwalk, he remained for a moment bewildered, blinking, astonished to be in broad daylight once more. Half-past four would soon strike, but he had nearly two hours to wait before calling at the house in the Rue Godot-de-Mauroy. What should he do? He paid his driver; preferring to descend the Champs Elysées on foot, since he had some time to lose. A walk, moreover, might calm the fever which was burning his hands, in the passion of charity which ever since the morning had been mastering him more and more, in proportion as he encountered fresh and fresh obsta-

cles. He now had but one pressing desire, to complete his good work, since success henceforth seemed certain. And he tried to restrain his steps and walk leisurely down the magnificent avenue, which had now been dried by the bright sun, and was enlivened by a concourse of people, while overhead the sky was again blue, lightly blue, as in springtime.

Nearly two hours to lose while, yonder, the wretched Laveuve lay with life ebbing from him on his bed of rags, in his icy den. Sudden feelings of revolt, of well-nigh irresistible impatience ascended from Pierre's heart, making him quiver with desire to run off and at once find Baroness Duvillard so as to obtain from her the all-saving order. He felt sure that she was somewhere near, in one of those quiet neighbouring streets, and great was his perturbation, his grief-fraught anger at having to wait in this wise to save a human life until she should have attended to those affairs of hers, of which her daughter spoke with such murderous glances! He seemed to hear a formidable cracking, the family life of the *bourgeoisie* was collapsing: the father was at a hussy's house, the mother with a lover, the son and daughter knew everything; the former gliding to idiotic perversity, the latter enraged and dreaming of stealing her mother's lover to make a husband of him. And meantime the splendid equipages descended the triumphal avenue, and the crowd with its luxury flowed along the sidewalks, one and all joyous and superb, seemingly with no idea that somewhere at the far end there was a gaping abyss wherein everyone of them would fall and be annihilated!

When Pierre got as far as the Summer Circus he was much surprised at again seeing Salvat, the journeyman engineer, on one of the avenue seats. He must have sunk down there, overcome by weariness and hunger, after many a vain search. However, his jacket was still distended by something he carried in or under it, some bit of bread, no doubt, which he meant to take home with him. And leaning back, with his arms hanging listlessly, he was watching with dreamy eyes the play of some very little children, who, with the help of their wooden spades, were laboriously raising mounds of sand, and then destroying them by dint of kicks. As he looked at them his red eyelids moistened, and a very gentle smile appeared on his poor discoloured lips. This time Pierre, penetrated by disquietude, wished to approach and question him. But Salvat distrustfully rose and went off towards the Circus, where a concert was drawing to a close; and he prowled around the entrance of that festive edifice in which two thousand happy people were heaped up together listening to music.

## V

### FROM RELIGION TO ANARCHY

As Pierre was reaching the Place de la Concorde he suddenly remembered the appointment which Abbé Rose had given him for five o'clock at the Madeleine, and which he was forgetting in the feverishness born of his repeated steps to save Laveuve. And at thought of it he hastened on, well pleased at having this appointment to occupy and keep him patient.

When he entered the church he was surprised to find it so dark. There were only a few candles burning, huge shadows were flooding the nave, and amidst the semi-obscurity a very loud, clear voice spoke on with a ceaseless streaming of words. All that one could at first distinguish of the numerous congregation was a pale, vague mass of heads, motionless with extreme attention. In the pulpit stood Monseigneur Martha, finishing his third address on the New Spirit. The two former ones had re-echoed far and wide, and so what is called "all Paris" was there — women of society, politicians, and writers, who were captivated by the speaker's artistic oratory, his warm, skilful language, and his broad, easy gestures, worthy of a great actor.

Pierre did not wish to disturb the solemn attention, the quivering silence above which the prelate's voice

alone rang out. Accordingly he resolved to wait before seeking Abbé Rose, and remained standing near a pillar. A parting gleam of daylight fell obliquely on Monseigneur Martha, who looked tall and sturdy in his white surplice, and scarcely showed a grey hair, although he was more than fifty. He had handsome features: black, keen eyes, a commanding nose, a mouth and chin of the greatest firmness of contour. What more particularly struck one, however, what gained the heart of every listener, was the expression of extreme amiability and anxious sympathy which ever softened the imperious haughtiness of the prelate's face.

Pierre had formerly known him as Curé, or parish priest, of Ste. Clotilde. He was doubtless of Italian origin, but he had been born in Paris, and had quitted the seminary of St Sulpice with the best possible record. Very intelligent and very ambitious, he had evinced an activity which even made his superiors anxious. Then, on being appointed Bishop of Persepolis, he had disappeared, gone to Rome, where he had spent five years engaged in work of which very little was known. However, since his return he had been astonishing Paris by his brilliant propaganda, busying himself with the most varied affairs, and becoming much appreciated and very powerful at the archiepiscopal residence. He devoted himself in particular, and with wonderful results, to the task of increasing the subscriptions for the completion of the basilica of the Sacred Heart. He recoiled from nothing, neither from journeys, nor lectures, nor collections, nor applications to Government, nor even endeav-



ours among Israelities and Freemasons. And at last, again enlarging his sphere of action, he had undertaken to reconcile Science with Catholicism, and to bring all Christian France to the Republic, on all sides expounding the policy of Pope Leo XIII, in order that the Church might finally triumph.

However, in spite of the advances of this influential and amiable man, Pierre scarcely liked him. He only felt grateful to him for one thing, the appointment of good Abbé Rose as curate at St. Pierre de Montmartre, which appointment he had secured for him no doubt in order to prevent such a scandal as the punishment of an old priest for showing himself too charitable. On thus finding and hearing the prelate speak in that renowned pulpit of the Madeleine, still and ever pursuing his work of conquest, Pierre remembered how he had seen him at the Duvillards' during the previous spring, when, with his usual *maestria*, he had achieved his greatest triumph — the conversion of Eve to Catholicism. That church, too, had witnessed her baptism, a wonderfully pompous ceremony, a perfect gala offered to the public which figures in all the great events of Parisian life. Gérard had knelt down, moved to tears, whilst the Baron triumphed like a good-natured husband who was happy to find religion establishing perfect harmony in his household. It was related among the spectators that Eve's family, and particularly old Justus Steinberger, her father, was not in reality much displeased by the affair. The old man sneeringly remarked, indeed, that he knew his daughter well enough to wish her to belong to his worst enemy. In the banking business there is

a class of security which one is pleased to see discounted by one's rivals. With the stubborn hope of triumph peculiar to his race, Justus, consoling himself for the failure of his first scheme, doubtless considered that Eve would prove a powerful dissolving agent in the Christian family which she had entered, and thus help to make all wealth and power fall into the hands of the Jews.

However, Pierre's vision faded. Monseigneur Martha's voice was rising with increase of volume, celebrating, amidst the quivering of the congregation, the benefits that would accrue from the New Spirit, which was at last about to pacify France and restore her to her due rank and power. Were there not certain signs of this resurrection on every hand? The New Spirit was the revival of the Ideal, the protest of the soul against degrading materialism, the triumph of spirituality over filthy literature; and it was also Science accepted, but set in its proper place, reconciled with Faith, since it no longer pretended to encroach on the latter's sacred domain; and it was further the Democracy welcomed in fatherly fashion, the Republic legitimated, recognised in her turn as Eldest Daughter of the Church. A breath of poetry passed by. The Church opened her heart to all her children, there would henceforth be but concord and delight if the masses, obedient to the New Spirit, would give themselves to the Master of love as they had given themselves to their kings, recognising that the Divinity was the one unique power, absolute sovereign of both body and soul.

Pierre was now listening attentively, wondering

where it was that he had previously heard almost identical words. And suddenly he remembered, and could fancy that he was again at Rome, listening to the last words of Monsignor Nani, the Assessor of the Holy Office. Here, again, he found the dream of a democratic Pope, ceasing to support the compromised monarchies, and seeking to subdue the masses. Since Cæsar was down, or nearly so, might not the Pope realise the ancient ambition of his forerunners and become both emperor and pontiff, the sovereign, universal divinity on earth? This, too, was the dream in which Pierre himself, with apostolic naiveté, had indulged when writing his book, "New Rome": a dream from which the sight of the real Rome had so roughly roused him. At bottom it was merely a policy of hypocritical falsehood, the priestly policy which relies on time, and is ever tenacious, carrying on the work of conquest with extraordinary suppleness, resolved to profit by everything. And what an evolution it was, the Church of Rome making advances to Science, to the Democracy, to the Republican *régimes*, convinced that it would be able to devour them if only it were allowed the time! Ah! yes, the New Spirit was simply the Old Spirit of Domination, incessantly reviving and hungering to conquer and possess the world.

Pierre thought that he recognised among the congregation certain deputies whom he had seen at the Chamber. Wasn't that tall gentleman with the fair beard, who listened so devoutly, one of Monferrand's creatures? It was said that Monferrand, once a devourer of priests, was now smilingly coquetting with

the clergy. Quite an underhand evolution was beginning in the sacristies, orders from Rome flitted hither and thither; it was a question of accepting the new form of government, and absorbing it by dint of invasion. France was still the Eldest Daughter of the Church, the only great nation which had sufficient health and strength to place the Pope in possession of his temporal power once more. So France must be won; it was well worth one's while to espouse her, even if she were Republican. In the eager struggle of ambition the bishop made use of the minister, who thought it to his interest to lean upon the bishop. But which of the two would end by devouring the other? And to what a rôle had religion sunk: an electoral weapon, an element in a parliamentary majority, a decisive, secret reason for obtaining or retaining a ministerial portfolio! Of divine charity, the basis of religion, there was no thought, and Pierre's heart filled with bitterness as he remembered the recent death of Cardinal Bergerot, the last of the great saints and pure minds of the French episcopacy, among which there now seemed to be merely a set of intriguers and fools.

However, the address was drawing to a close. In a glowing peroration, which evoked the basilica of the Sacred Heart dominating Paris with the saving symbol of the Cross from the sacred Mount of the Martyrs,<sup>1</sup> Monseigneur Martha showed that great city of Paris Christian once more and master of the world, thanks to the moral omnipotence conferred upon it by the divine breath of the New Spirit. Unable to

<sup>1</sup> Montmartre

applaud, the congregation gave utterance to a murmur of approving rapture, delighted as it was with this miraculous finish which reassured both pocket and conscience. Then Monseigneur Martha quitted the pulpit with a noble step, whilst a loud noise of chairs broke upon the dark peacefulness of the church, where the few lighted candles glittered like the first stars in the evening sky. A long stream of men, vague, whispering shadows, glided away. The women alone remained, praying on their knees.

Pierre, still in the same spot, was rising on tip-toes, looking for Abbé Rose, when a hand touched him. It was that of the old priest, who had seen him from a distance "I was yonder near the pulpit," said he, "and I saw you plainly, my dear child. Only I preferred to wait so as to disturb nobody. What a beautiful address dear Monseigneur delivered!"

He seemed, indeed, much moved. But there was deep sadness about his kindly mouth and clear child-like eyes, whose smile as a rule illumined his good, round white face. "I was afraid you might go off without seeing me," he resumed, "for I have something to tell you. You know that poor old man to whom I sent you this morning and in whom I asked you to interest yourself? Well, on getting home I found a lady there, who sometimes brings me a little money for my poor. Then I thought to myself that the three francs I gave you were really too small a sum, and as the thought worried me like a kind of remorse, I couldn't resist the impulse, but went this afternoon to the Rue des Saules myself."

He lowered his voice from a feeling of respect, in

order not to disturb the deep, sepulchral silence of the church. Covert shame, moreover, impeded his utterance, shame at having again relapsed into the sin of blind, imprudent charity, as his superiors reproachfully said. And, quivering, he concluded in a very low voice indeed. "And so, my child, picture my grief. I had five francs more to give the poor old man, and I found him dead"

Pierre suddenly shuddered. But he was unwilling to understand. "What, dead!" he cried. "That old man dead! Laveuve dead?"

"Yes, I found him dead—ah! amidst what frightful wretchedness, like an old animal that has laid itself down for the finish on a heap of rags in the depths of a hole. No neighbours had assisted him in his last moments; he had simply turned himself towards the wall. And ah! how bare and cold and deserted it was! And what a pang for a poor creature to go off like that without a word, a caress. Ah! my heart bounded within me and it is still bleeding!"

Pierre in his utter amazement at first made but a gesture of revolt against imbecile social cruelty. Had the bread left near the unfortunate wretch, and devoured too eagerly, perhaps, after long days of abstinence, been the cause of his death? Or was not this rather the fatal *dénouement* of an ended life, worn away by labour and privation? However, what did the cause signify? Death had come and delivered the poor man. "It isn't he that I pity," Pierre muttered at last; "it is we—we who witness all that, we who are guilty of these abominations."

But good Abbé Rose was already becoming resigned,

and would only think of forgiveness and hope. "No, no, my child, rebellion is evil. If we are all guilty we can only implore Providence to forget our faults. I had given you an appointment here hoping for good news; and it's I who come to tell you of that frightful thing. Let us be penitent and pray."

Then he knelt upon the flagstones near the pillar, in the rear of the praying women, who looked black and vague in the gloom. And he inclined his white head, and for a long time remained in a posture of humility.

But Pierre was unable to pray, so powerfully did revolt stir him. He did not even bend his knees, but remained erect and quivering. His heart seemed to have been crushed; not a tear came to his ardent eyes. So Laveuve had died yonder, stretched on his litter of rags, his hands clenched in his obstinate desire to cling to his life of torture, whilst he, Pierre, again glowing with the flame of charity, consumed by apostolic zeal, was scouring Paris to find him for the evening a clean bed on which he might be saved. Ah! the atrocious irony of it all! He must have been at the Duvillards' in the warm *salon*, all blue and silver, whilst the old man was expiring; and it was for a wretched corpse that he had then hastened to the Chamber of Deputies, to the Countess de Quinsac's, to that creature Silviane's, and to that creature Rosemonde's. And it was for that corpse, freed from life, escaped from misery as from prison, that he had worried people, broken in upon their egotism, disturbed the peace of some, threatened the pleasures of others! What was the use of hastening from the parliamentary den to the cold *salon* where the dust of the past was congealing; of going

from the sphere of middle-class debauchery to that of cosmopolitan extravagance, since one always arrived too late, and saved people when they were already dead ? How ridiculous to have allowed himself to be fired once more by that blaze of charity, that final conflagration, only the ashes of which he now felt within him ? This time he thought he was dead himself; he was naught but an empty sepulchre

And all the frightful void and chaos which he had felt that morning at the basilica of the Sacred Heart after his mass became yet deeper, henceforth unfathomable. If charity were illusory and useless the Gospel crumbled, the end of the Book was nigh. After centuries of stubborn efforts, Redemption through Christianity failed, and another means of salvation was needed by the world in presence of the exasperated thirst for justice which came from the duped and wretched nations. They would have no more of that deceptive paradise, the promise of which had so long served to prop up social iniquity; they demanded that the question of happiness should be decided upon this earth. But how ? By means of what new religion, what combination between the sentiment of the Divine and the necessity for honouring life in its sovereignty and its fruitfulness ? Therein lay the grievous, torturing problem, into the midst of which Pierre was sinking; he, a priest, severed by vows of chastity and superstition from the rest of mankind.

He had ceased to believe in the efficacy of alms; it was not sufficient that one should be charitable, henceforth one must be just. Given justice, indeed,



horrid misery would disappear, and no such thing as charity would be needed. Most certainly there was no lack of compassionate hearts in that grievous city of Paris; charitable foundations sprouted forth there like green leaves at the first warmth of springtide. There were some for every age, every peril, every misfortune. Through the concern shown for mothers, children were succoured even before they were born; then came the infant and orphan asylums lavishly provided for all sorts of classes; and, afterwards, man was followed through his life, help was tendered on all sides, particularly as he grew old, by a multiplicity of asylums, almshouses, and refuges. And there were all the hands stretched out to the forsaken ones, the disinherited ones, even the criminals, all sorts of associations to protect the weak, societies for the prevention of crime, homes that offered hospitality to those who repented. Whether as regards the propagation of good deeds, the support of the young, the saving of life, the bestowal of pecuniary help, or the promotion of guilds, pages and pages would have been needed merely to particularise the extraordinary vegetation of charity that sprouted between the paving-stones of Paris with so fine a vigour, in which goodness of soul was mingled with social vanity. Still that could not matter, since charity redeemed and purified all. But how terrible the proposition that this charity was a useless mockery! What! after so many centuries of Christian charity not a sore had healed. Misery had only grown and spread, irritated even to rage. Incessantly aggravated, the evil was reaching the point when it would be impossible to tolerate it for another

day, since social injustice was neither arrested nor even diminished thereby. And besides, if only one single old man died of cold and hunger, did not the social edifice, raised on the theory of charity, collapse? But one victim, and society was condemned, thought Pierre.

He now felt such bitterness of heart that he could remain no longer in that church where the shadows ever slowly fell, blurring the sanctuaries and the large pale images of Christ nailed upon the Cross. All was about to sink into darkness, and he could hear nothing beyond an expiring murmur of prayers, a plaint from the women who were praying on their knees, in the depths of the shrouding gloom.

At the same time he hardly liked to go off without saying a word to Abbé Rose, who in his entreaties born of simple faith left the happiness and peace of mankind to the good pleasure of the Invisible. However, fearing that he might disturb him, Pierre was making up his mind to retire, when the old priest of his own accord raised his head. "Ah, my child," said he, "how difficult it is to be good in a reasonable manner. Monseigneur Martha has scolded me again, and but for the forgiveness of God I should fear for my salvation."

For a moment Pierre paused under the porticus of the Madeleine, on the summit of the great flight of steps which, rising above the railings, dominates the Place. Before him was the Rue Royale dipping down to the expanse of the Place de la Concorde, where rose the obelisk and the pair of plashing fountains. And, farther yet, the paling colonnade of the Chamber of

Deputies bounded the horizon. It was a vista of sovereign grandeur under that pale sky over which twilight was slowly stealing, and which seemed to broaden the thoroughfares, throw back the edifices, and lend them the quivering, soaring aspect of the palaces of dreamland. No other capital in the world could boast a scene of such aerial pomp, such grandiose magnificence, at that hour of vagueness, when falling night imparts to cities a dreamy semblance, the infinite of human immensity.

Motionless and hesitating in presence of the opening expanse, Pierre distressfully pondered as to whither he should go now that all which he had so passionately sought to achieve since the morning had suddenly crumbled away. Was he still bound for the Duvillard mansion in the Rue Godot-de-Mauroy? He no longer knew. Then the exasperating remembrance, with its cruel irony, returned to him. Since Laveuve was dead, of what use was it for him to kill time and perambulate the pavements pending the arrival of six o'clock? The idea that he had a home, and that the most simple course would be to return to it, did not even occur to him. He felt as if there were something of importance left for him to do, though he could not possibly tell what it might be. It seemed to him to be everywhere and yet very far away, to be so vague and so difficult of accomplishment that he would certainly never be in time or have sufficient power to do it. However, with heavy feet and tumultuous brain he descended the steps and, yielding to some obstinate impulse, began to walk through the flower-market, a late winter market where the first azaleas were open-

ing with a little shiver. Some women were purchasing Nice roses and violets, and Pierre looked at them as if he were interested in all that soft, delicate, perfumed luxury. But suddenly he felt a horror of it and went off, starting along the Boulevards.

He walked straight before him without knowing why or whither. The falling darkness surprised him as if it were an unexpected phenomenon. Raising his eyes to the sky he felt astonished at seeing its azure gently pale between the slender black streaks of the chimney funnels. And the huge golden letters by which names or trades were advertised on every balcony also seemed to him singular in the last gleams of the daylight. Never before had he paid attention to the motley tints seen on the house-fronts, the painted mirrors, the blinds, the coats of arms, the posters of violent hues, the magnificent shops, like drawing-rooms and boudoirs open to the full light. And then, both in the roadway and along the foot-pavements, between the blue, red or yellow columns and kiosks, what mighty traffic there was, what an extraordinary crowd! The vehicles rolled along in a thundering stream: on all sides billows of cabs were parted by the ponderous tacking of huge omnibuses, which suggested lofty, bright-hued battle-ships. And on either hand, and farther and farther, and even among the wheels, the flood of passengers rushed on incessantly, with the conquering haste of ants in a state of revolution. Whence came all those people, and whither were all those vehicles going? How stupefying and torturing it all was.

Pierre was still walking straight ahead, mechani-

cally, carried on by his gloomy reverie. Night was coming, the first gas-burners were being lighted; it was the dusk of Paris, the hour when real darkness has not yet come, when the electric lights flame in the dying day. Lamps shone forth on all sides, the shop-fronts were being illumined. Soon, moreover, right along the Boulevards the vehicles would carry their vivid starry lights, like a milky way on the march betwixt the foot-pavements all glowing with lanterns and cordons and girandoles, a dazzling profusion of radiance akin to sunlight. And the shouts of the drivers and the jostling of the foot passengers re-echoed the parting haste of the Paris which is all business or passion, which is absorbed in the merciless struggle for love and for money. The hard day was over, and now the Paris of Pleasure was lighting up for its night of *fête*. The cafés, the wine shops, the restaurants, flared and displayed their bright metal bars, and their little white tables behind their clear and lofty windows, whilst near their doors, by way of temptation, were oysters and choice fruits. And the Paris which was thus awaking with the first flashes of the gas was already full of the gaiety of enjoyment, already yielding to an unbridled appetite for whatsoever may be purchased.

However, Pierre had a narrow escape from being knocked down. A flock of newspaper hawkers came out of a side street, and darted through the crowd shouting the titles of the evening journals. A fresh edition of the "*Voix du Peuple*" gave rise, in particular, to a deafening clamour, which rose above all the rumbling of wheels. At regular intervals hoarse

voices raised and repeated the cry. "Ask for the 'Voix du Peuple' — the new scandal of the African Railway Lines, the repulse of the ministry, the thirty-two bribe-takers of the Chamber and the Senate!" And these announcements, set in huge type, could be read on the copies of the paper, which the hawkers flourished like banners. Accustomed as it was to such filth, saturated with infamy, the crowd continued on its way without paying much attention. Still a few men paused and bought the paper, while painted women, who had come down to the Boulevards in search of a dinner, trailed their skirts and waited for some chance lover, glancing interrogatively at the outside customers of the cafés. And meantime the dishonouring shout of the newspaper hawkers, that cry in which there was both smirch and buffet, seemed like the last knell of the day, ringing the nation's funeral at the outset of the night of pleasure which was beginning.

Then Pierre once more remembered his morning and that frightful house in the Rue des Saules, where so much want and suffering were heaped up. He again saw the yard filthy like a quagmire, the evil-smelling staircases, the sordid, bare, icy rooms, the families fighting for messes which even stray dogs would not have eaten; the mothers, with exhausted breasts, carrying screaming children to and fro, the old men who fell in corners like brute beasts, and died of hunger amidst filth. And then came his other hours with the magnificence or the quietude or the gaiety of the *salons* through which he had passed, the whole insolent display of financial Paris, and political

Paris, and society Paris. And at last he came to the dusk, and to that Paris-Sodom and Paris-Gomorra before him, which was lighting itself up for the night, for the abominations of that accomplice night which, like fine dust, was little by little submerging the expanse of roofs. And the hateful monstrosity of it all howled aloud under the pale sky where the first pure, twinkling stars were gleaming.

A great shudder came upon Pierre as he thought of all that mass of iniquity and suffering, of all that went on below amid want and crime, and all that went on above amid wealth and vice. The *bourgeoisie*, wielding power, would relinquish naught of the sovereignty which it had conquered, wholly stolen, while the people, the eternal dupe, silent so long, clenched its fists and growled, claiming its legitimate share. And it was that frightful injustice which filled the growing gloom with anger. From what dark-breasted cloud would the thunderbolt fall? For years he had been waiting for that thunderbolt which low rumbles announced on all points of the horizon. And if he had written a book full of candour and hope, if he had gone in all innocence to Rome, it was to avert that thunderbolt and its frightful consequences. But all hope of the kind was dead within him; he felt that the thunderbolt was inevitable, that nothing henceforth could stay the catastrophe. And never before had he felt it to be so near, amidst the happy impudence of some, and the exasperated distress of others. And it was gathering, and it would surely fall over that Paris, all lust and bravado, which, when evening came, thus stirred up its furnace.

Tired out and distracted, Pierre raised his eyes as he reached the Place de l'Opéra. Where was he then? The heart of the great city seemed to beat on this spot, in that vast expanse where met so many thoroughfares, as if from every point the blood of distant districts flowed thither along triumphal avenues. Right away to the horizon stretched the great gaps of the Avenue de l'Opéra, the Rue du Quatre-Septembre, and the Rue de la Paix, still showing clearly in a final glimpse of daylight, but already starred with swarming sparks. The torrent of the Boulevard traffic poured across the Place, where clashed, too, all that from the neighbouring streets, with a constant turning and eddying which made the spot the most dangerous of whirlpools. In vain did the police seek to impose some little prudence, the stream of pedestrians still overflowed, wheels became entangled and horses reared amidst all the uproar of the human tide, which was as loud, as incessant, as the tempest voice of an ocean. Then there was the detached mass of the opera-house, slowly steeped in gloom, and rising huge and mysterious like a symbol, its lyre-bearing figure of Apollo, right aloft, showing a last reflection of daylight amidst the livid sky. And all the windows of the house-fronts began to shine, gaiety sprang from those thousands of lamps which coruscated one by one, a universal longing for ease and free gratification of each desire spread with the increasing darkness, whilst, at long intervals, the large globes of the electric lights shone as brightly as the moons of the city's cloudless nights.

But why was he, Pierre, there, he asked himself,



irritated and wondering. Since Laveuve was dead he had but to go home, bury himself in his nook, and close up door and windows, like one who was henceforth useless, who had neither belief nor hope, and awaited naught save annihilation. It was a long journey from the Place de l'Opéra to his little house at Neuilly. Still, however great his weariness, he would not take a cab, but retraced his steps, turning towards the Madeleine again, and plunging into the scramble of the pavements, amidst the deafening uproar from the roadway, with a bitter desire to aggravate his wound and saturate himself with revolt and anger. Was it not yonder at the corner of that street, at the end of that Boulevard, that he would find the expected abyss into which that rotten world, whose old society he could hear rending at each step, must soon assuredly topple?

However, when Pierre wished to cross the Rue Scribe a block in the traffic made him halt. In front of a luxurious café two tall, shabbily-clad and very dirty fellows were alternately offering the "*Voix du Peuple*" with its account of the scandals and the bribe-takers of the Chamber and the Senate, in voices so suggestive of cracked brass that passers-by clustered around them. And here, in a hesitating, wondering man, who after listening drew near to the large café and peered through its windows, Pierre was once again amazed to recognise Salvat. This time the meeting struck him forcibly, filled him with suspicion to such a point that he also stopped and resolved to watch the journeyman engineer. He did not expect that one of such wretched aspect, with what seemed

to be a hunk of bread distending his old ragged jacket, would enter and seat himself at one of the café's little tables amidst the warm gaiety of the lamps. However, he waited for a moment, and then saw him wander away with slow and broken steps as if the café, which was nearly empty, did not suit him. What could he have been seeking, whither had he been going, since the morning, ever on a wild, solitary chase through the Paris of wealth and enjoyment while hunger dogged his steps? It was only with difficulty that he now dragged himself along, his will and energy seemed to be exhausted. As if quite overcome, he drew near to a kiosk, and for a moment leant against it. Then, however, he drew himself up again, and walked on further, still as it were in search of something.

And now came an incident which brought Pierre's emotion to a climax. A tall sturdy man on turning out of the Rue Caumartin caught sight of Salvat, and approached him. And just as the new comer without false pride was shaking the workman's hand, Pierre recognised him as his brother Guillaume. Yes, it was indeed he, with his thick bushy hair already white like snow, though he was but seven-and-forty. However, his heavy moustaches had remained quite dark without one silver thread, thus lending an expression of vigorous life to his full face with its lofty towering brow. It was from his father that he had inherited that brow of impregnable logic and reason, similar to that which Pierre himself possessed. But the lower part of the elder brother's countenance was fuller than that of his junior; his nose was larger, his

chin was square, and his mouth broad and firm of contour. A pale scar, the mark of an old wound, streaked his left temple. And his physiognomy, though it might at first seem very grave, rough, and unexpansive, beamed with masculine kindness whenever a smile revealed his teeth, which had remained extremely white.

While looking at his brother, Pierre remembered what Madame Théodore had told him that morning. Guillaume, touched by Salvat's dire want, had arranged to give him a few days' employment. And this explained the air of interest with which he now seemed to be questioning him, while the engineer, whom the meeting disturbed, stamped about as if eager to resume his mournful ramble. For a moment Guillaume appeared to notice the other's perturbation, by the embarrassed answers which he obtained from him. Still, they at last parted as if each were going his way. Then, however, almost immediately, Guillaume turned round again and watched the other, as with harassed stubborn mien he went off through the crowd. And the thoughts which had come to Guillaume must have been very serious and very pressing, for he all at once began to retrace his steps and follow the workman from a distance, as if to ascertain for certain what direction he would take.

Pierre had watched the scene with growing disquietude. His nervous apprehension of some great unknown calamity, the suspicions born of his frequent and inexplicable meetings with Salvat, his surprise at now seeing his brother mingled with the affair, all helped to fill him with a pressing desire to know, wit-

ness, and perhaps prevent. So he did not hesitate, but began to follow the others in a prudent way

Fresh perturbation came upon him when first Salvat and then Guillaume suddenly turned into the Rue Godot-de-Mauroy. What destiny was thus bringing him back to that street whither a little time previously he had wished to return in feverish haste, and whence only the death of Laveuve had kept him? And his consternation increased yet further when, after losing sight of Salvat for a moment, he saw him standing in front of the Duvillard mansion, on the same spot where he had fancied he recognised him that morning. As it happened the carriage entrance of the mansion was wide open. Some repairs had been made to the paving of the porch, and although the workmen had now gone off, the doorway remained gaping, full of the falling night. The narrow street, running from the glittering Boulevard, was steeped in bluish gloom, starred at long intervals by a few gas-lamps. Some women went by, compelling Salvat to step off the foot-pavement. But he returned to it again, lighted the stump of a cigar, some remnant which he had found under a table outside a café, and then resumed his watch, patient and motionless, in front of the mansion.

Disturbed by his dim conjectures, Pierre gradually grew frightened, and asked himself if he ought not to approach that man. The chief thing that detained him was the presence of his brother, whom he had seen disappear into a neighbouring doorway, whence he also was observing the engineer, ready to intervene. And so Pierre contented himself with not losing sight of Salvat, who was still waiting and watching, merely

taking his eyes from the mansion in order to glance towards the Boulevard as though he expected someone or something which would come from that direction. And at last, indeed, the Duvillards' landau appeared, with coachman and footman in livery of green and gold — a closed landau to which a pair of tall horses of superb build were harnessed in stylish fashion.

Contrary to custom, however, the carriage, which at that hour usually brought the father and mother home, was only occupied that evening by the son and daughter, Hyacinthe and Camille. Returning from the Princess de Harn's *matinée*, they were chatting freely, with that calm immodesty by which they sought to astonish one another. Hyacinthe, influenced by his perverted ideas, was attacking women, whilst Camille openly counselled him to respond to the Princess's advances. However, she was visibly irritated and feverish that evening, and, suddenly changing the subject, she began to speak of their mother and Gérard de Quinsac.

"But what can it matter to you?" quietly retorted Hyacinthe; and, seeing that she almost bounded from the seat at this remark, he continued: "Are you still in love with him, then? Do you still want to marry him?"

"Yes, I do, and I will!" she cried with all the jealous rage of an uncomely girl, who suffered so acutely at seeing herself spurned whilst her yet beautiful mother stole from her the man she wanted.

"You will, you will!" resumed Hyacinthe, well pleased to have an opportunity of teasing his sister, whom he somewhat feared. "But you won't unless he is willing — And he doesn't care for you."

"He does!" retorted Camille in a fury. "He's kind and pleasant with me, and that's enough."

Her brother felt afraid as he noticed the blackness of her glance, and the clenching of her weak little hands, whose fingers bent like claws. And after a pause he asked. "And papa, what does he say about it?"

"Oh, papa! All that he cares about is the other one."

Then Hyacinthe began to laugh.

But the landau, with its tall horses trotting on sonorously, had turned into the street and was approaching the house, when a slim fair-haired girl of sixteen or seventeen, a modiste's errand girl with a large bandbox on her arm, hastily crossed the road in order to enter the arched doorway before the carriage. She was bringing a bonnet for the Baroness, and had come all along the Boulevard musing, with her soft blue eyes, her pinky nose, and her mouth which ever laughed in the most adorable little face that one could see. And it was at this same moment that Salvat, after another glance at the landau, sprang forward and entered the doorway. An instant afterwards he reappeared, flung his lighted cigar stump into the gutter; and without undue haste went off, slinking into the depths of the vague gloom of the street.

And then what happened? Pierre, later on, remembered that a dray of the Western Railway Company in coming up stopped and delayed the landau for a moment, whilst the young errand girl entered the doorway. And with a heart-pang beyond description

he saw his brother Guillaume in his turn spring forward and rush into the mansion as though impelled to do so by some revelation, some sudden certainty. He, Pierre, though he understood nothing clearly, could divine the approach of some frightful horror. But when he would have run, when he would have shouted, he found himself as if nailed to the pavement, and felt his throat clutched as by a hand of lead. Then suddenly came a thunderous roar, a formidable explosion, as if the earth was opening, and the lightning-struck mansion was being annihilated. Every window-pane of the neighbouring houses was shattered, the glass raining down with the loud clatter of hail. For a moment a hellish flame fired the street, and the dust and the smoke were such that the few passers-by were blinded and howled with affright, aghast at toppling, as they thought, into that fiery furnace.

And that dazzling flare brought Pierre enlightenment. He once more saw the bomb distending the tool-bag, which lack of work had emptied and rendered useless. He once more saw it under the ragged jacket, a protuberance caused, he had fancied, by some hunk of bread, picked up in a corner and treasured that it might be carried home to wife and child. After wandering and threatening all happy Paris, it was there that it had flared, there that it had burst with a thunder-clap, there on the threshold of the sovereign *bourgeoisie* to whom all wealth belonged. He, however, at that moment thought only of his brother Guillaume, and flung himself into that porch where a volcanic crater seemed to have opened. And at first

he distinguished nothing, the acrid smoke streamed over all. Then he perceived the walls split, the upper floor rent open, the paving broken up, strewn with fragments. Outside, the landau which had been on the point of entering, had escaped all injury, neither of the horses had been touched, nor was there even a scratch on any panel of the vehicle. But the young girl, the pretty, slim, fair-haired errand girl, lay there on her back, her stomach ripped open, whilst her delicate face remained intact, her eyes clear, her smile full of astonishment, so swiftly and lightning-like had come the catastrophe. And near her, from the fallen bandbox, whose lid had merely come unfastened, had rolled the bonnet, a very fragile pink bonnet, which still looked charming in its flowery freshness.

By a prodigy Guillaume was alive and already on his legs again. His left hand alone streamed with blood, a projectile seemed to have broken his wrist. His moustaches moreover had been burnt, and the explosion by throwing him to the ground had so shaken and bruised him that he shivered from head to feet as with intense cold. Nevertheless, he recognised his brother without even feeling astonished to see him there, as indeed often happens after great disasters, when the unexplained becomes providential. That brother, of whom he had so long lost sight, was there, naturally enough, because it was necessary that he should be there. And Guillaume, amidst the wild quivers by which he was shaken, at once cried to him: "Take me away! take me away! To your house at Neuilly, oh! take me away!"

Then, for sole explanation, and referring to Salvat,



he stammered "I suspected that he had stolen a cartridge from me; only one, most fortunately, for otherwise the whole district would have been blown to pieces. Ah! the wretched fellow! I wasn't in time to set my foot upon the match."

With perfect lucidity of mind, such as danger sometimes imparts, Pierre, neither speaking nor losing a moment, remembered that the mansion had a back entrance fronting the Rue Vignon. He had just realised in what serious peril his brother would be if he were found mixed up in that affair. And with all speed, when he had led him into the gloom of the Rue Vignon, he tied his handkerchief round his wrist, which he bade him press to his chest, under his coat, as that would conceal it.

But Guillaume, still shivering and haunted by the horror he had witnessed, repeated "Take me away — to your place at Neuilly — not to my home"

"Of course, of course, be easy. Come, wait here a second, I will stop a cab."

In his eagerness to procure a conveyance, Pierre had brought his brother down to the Boulevard again. But the terrible thunderclap of the explosion had upset the whole neighbourhood, horses were still rearing, and people were running demented, hither and thither. And numerous policemen had hastened up, and a rushing crowd was already blocking the lower part of the Rue Godot-de-Mauroy, which was now as black as a pit, every light in it having been extinguished; whilst on the Boulevard a hawker of the "*Voix du Peuple*" still stubbornly vociferated: "The new scandal of the African Railway Lines! The thirty-two bribe-takers

of the Chamber and the Senate! The approaching fall of the ministry!"

Pierre was at last managing to stop a cab when he heard a person who ran by say to another, "The ministry? Ah, well! that bomb will mend it right enough!"

Then the brothers seated themselves in the cab, which carried them away. And now, over the whole of rumbling Paris black night had gathered, an unforgiving night, in which the stars foundered amidst the mist of crime and anger that had risen from the house-roofs. The great cry of justice swept by amidst the same terrifying flapping of wings which Sodom and Gomorrah once heard bearing down upon them from all the black clouds of the horizon.

## BOOK II



### I

#### REVOLUTIONISTS

IN that out-of-the-way street at Neuilly, along which nobody passed after dusk, Pierre's little house was now steeped in deep slumber under the black sky; each of its shutters closed, and not a ray of light stealing forth from within. And one could divine, too, the profound quietude of the little garden in the rear, a garden empty and lifeless, benumbed by the winter cold.

Pierre had several times feared that his brother would faint away in the cab in which they were journeying. Leaning back, and often sinking down, Guillaume spoke not a word. And terrible was the silence between them — a silence fraught with all the questions and answers which they felt it would be useless and painful to exchange at such a time. However, the priest was anxious about the wound, and wondered to what surgeon he might apply, desirous as he was of admitting only a sure, staunch man into the secret, for he had noticed with how keen a desire to disappear his brother had sought to hide himself.

Until they reached the Arc de Triomphe the silence remained unbroken. It was only there that Guillaume seemed to emerge from the prostration of his reverie.

"Mind, Pierre," said he, "no doctor We will attend to this together."

Pierre was on the point of protesting, but he realised that it would be useless to discuss the subject at such a moment, and so he merely waved his hand to signify that he should act in spite of the prohibition were it necessary. In point of fact, his anxiety had increased, and, when the cab at last drew up before the house, it was with real relief that he saw his brother alight without evincing any marked feebleness. He himself quickly paid the driver, well-pleased, too, at finding that nobody, not even a neighbour, was about. And having opened the door with his latch key, he helped the injured man to ascend the steps.

A little night lamp glimmered faintly in the vestibule. On hearing the door open, Pierre's servant, Sophie, had at once emerged from the kitchen. A short, thin, dark woman of sixty, she had formed part of the household for more than thirty years, having served the mother before serving the son. She knew Guillaume, having seen him when he was a young man, and doubtless she now recognised him, although well-nigh ten years had gone by since he had last crossed that threshold. Instead of evincing any surprise, she seemed to consider his extraordinary return quite natural, and remained as silent and discreet as usual. She led, indeed, the life of a recluse, never speaking unless her work absolutely required it. And thus she now contented herself with saying: "Monsieur l'Abbé, Monsieur Bertheroy is in the study, and has been waiting there for a quarter of an hour."

At this Guillaume intervened, as if the news revived him. "Does Bertheroy still come here, then? I'll see him willingly. His is one of the best, the broadest, minds of these days. He has still remained my master."

A former friend of their father,—the illustrious chemist, Michel Froment,—Bertheroy had now, in his turn, become one of the loftiest glories of France, one to whom chemistry owed much of the extraordinary progress that has made it the mother-science, by which the very face of the earth is being changed. A member of the Institute, laden with offices and honours, he had retained much affection for Pierre, and occasionally visited him in this wise before dinner, by way of relaxation, he would say.

"You showed him into the study? All right, then, we will go there," said the Abbé to the servant. "Light a lamp and take it into my room, and get my bed ready so that my brother may go to bed at once."

While Sophie, without a word or sign of surprise, was obeying these instructions, the brothers went into their father's former laboratory, of which the priest had now made a spacious study. And it was with a cry of joyous astonishment that the *savant* greeted them on seeing them enter the room side by side, the one supporting the other. "What, together!" he exclaimed. "Ah! my dear children, you could not have caused me greater pleasure! I who have so often deplored your painful misunderstanding."

Bertheroy was a tall and lean septuagenarian, with angular features. His yellow skin clung like parch-

ment to the projecting bones of his cheeks and jaw. Moreover, there was nothing imposing about him; he looked like some old shop-keeping herbalist. At the same time he had a fine, broad, smooth brow, and his eyes still glittered brightly beneath his tangled hair.

"What, have you injured yourself, Guillaume?" he continued, as soon as he saw the bandaged hand.

Pierre remained silent, so as to let his brother tell the story as he chose. Guillaume had realised that he must confess the truth, but in simple fashion, without detailing the circumstances. "Yes, in an explosion," he answered, "and I really think that I have my wrist broken."

At this, Bertheroy, whose glance was fixed upon him, noticed that his moustaches were burnt, and that there was an expression of bewildered stupor, such as follows a catastrophe, in his eyes. Forthwith the *savant* became grave and circumspect; and, without seeking to compel confidence by any questions, he simply said: "Indeed! an explosion! Will you let me see the injury? You know that before letting chemistry ensnare me I studied medicine, and am still somewhat of a surgeon."

On hearing these words Pierre could not restrain a heart-cry: "Yes, yes, master! Look at the injury — I was very anxious, and to find you here is unhopèd-for good fortune!"

The *savant* glanced at him, and divined that the hidden circumstances of the accident must be serious. And then, as Guillaume, smiling, though paling with weakness, consented to the suggestion, Bertheroy retorted that before anything else he must be put

to bed. The servant just then returned to say the bed was ready, and so they all went into the adjoining room, where the injured man was soon undressed and helped between the sheets.

"Light me, Pierre," said Bertheroy, "take the lamp; and let Sophie give me a basin full of water and some cloths." Then, having gently washed the wound, he resumed: "The devil! The wrist isn't broken, but it's a nasty injury. I am afraid there must be a lesion of the bone. Some nails passed through the flesh, did they not?"

Receiving no reply, he relapsed into silence. But his surprise was increasing, and he closely examined the hand, which the flame of the explosion had scorched, and even sniffed the shirt cuff as if seeking to understand the affair better. He evidently recognised the effects of one of those new explosives which he himself had studied, almost created. In the present case, however, he must have been puzzled, for there were characteristic signs and traces the significance of which escaped him.

"And so," he at last made up his mind to ask, carried away by professional curiosity, "and so it was a laboratory explosion which put you in this nice condition? What devilish powder were you concocting then?"

Guillaume, ever since he had seen Bertheroy thus studying his injury, had, in spite of his sufferings, given marked signs of annoyance and agitation. And as if the real secret which he wished to keep lay precisely in the question now put to him, in that powder, the first experiment with which had thus injured him,

he replied with an air of restrained ardour, and a straight frank glance "Pray do not question me, master. I cannot answer you. You have, I know, sufficient nobility of nature to nurse me and care for me without exacting a confession."

"Oh! certainly, my friend," exclaimed Bertheroy, "keep your secret. Your discovery belongs to you if you have made one; and I know that you are capable of putting it to the most generous use. Besides, you must be aware that I have too great a passion for truth to judge the actions of others, whatever their nature, without knowing every circumstance and motive."

So saying, he waved his hand as if to indicate how broadly tolerant and free from error and superstition was that lofty sovereign mind of his, which in spite of all the orders that bedizened him, in spite of all the academical titles that he bore as an official *savant*, made him a man of the boldest and most independent views, one whose only passion was truth, as he himself said.

He lacked the necessary appliances to do more than dress the wound, after making sure that no fragment of any projectile had remained in the flesh. Then he at last went off, promising to return at an early hour on the morrow; and, as the priest escorted him to the street door, he spoke some comforting words: if the bone had not been deeply injured all would be well.

On returning to the bedside, Pierre found his brother still sitting up and seeking fresh energy in his desire to write home and tranquillise his loved ones. So the priest, after providing pen and paper,



again had to take up the lamp and light him. Guillaume fortunately retained full use of his right hand, and was thus able to pen a few lines to say that he would not be home that night. He addressed the note to Madame Leroi, the mother of his deceased mistress, who, since the latter's death, had remained with him and had reared his three sons. Pierre was aware also that the household at Montmartre included a young woman of five or six and twenty, the daughter of an old friend, to whom Guillaume had given shelter on her father's death, and whom he was soon to marry, in spite of the great difference in their ages. For the priest, however, all these were vague, disturbing things, condemnable features of disorderly life, and he had invariably pretended to be ignorant of them.

"So you wish this note to be taken to Montmartre at once?" he said to his brother.

"Yes, at once. It is scarcely more than seven o'clock now, and it will be there by eight. And you will choose a reliable man, won't you?"

"The best course will be for Sophie to take a cab. We need have no fear with her. She won't chatter. Wait a moment, and I will settle everything."

Sophie, on being summoned, at once understood what was wanted of her, and promised to say, in reply to any questions, that M. Guillaume had come to spend the night at his brother's, for reasons which she did not know. And without indulging in any reflections herself, she left the house, saying simply: "Monsieur l'Abbé's dinner is ready; he will only have to take the broth and the stew off the stove."

However, when Pierre this time returned to the bedside to sit down there, he found that Guillaume had fallen back with his head resting on both pillows. And he looked very weary and pale, and showed signs of fever. The lamp, standing on a corner of a side table, cast a soft light around, and so deep was the quietude that the big clock in the adjoining dining-room could be heard ticking. For a moment the silence continued around the two brothers, who, after so many years of separation, were at last re-united and alone together. Then the injured man brought his right hand to the edge of the sheet, and the priest grasped it, pressed it tenderly in his own. And the clasp was a long one, those two brotherly hands remaining locked, one in the other

"My poor little Pierre," Guillaume faintly murmured, "you must forgive me for falling on you in this fashion. I've invaded the house and taken your bed, and I'm preventing you from dining."

"Don't talk, don't tire yourself any more," interrupted Pierre. "Is not this the right place for you when you are in trouble?"

A warmer pressure came from Guillaume's feverish hand, and tears gathered in his eyes. "Thanks, my little Pierre. I've found you again, and you are as gentle and loving as you always were. Ah! you cannot know how delightful it seems to me."

Then the priest's eyes also were dimmed by tears. Amidst the deep quietude, the great sense of comfort which had followed their violent emotion, the brothers found an infinite charm in being together once more

in the home of their childhood<sup>1</sup> It was there that both their father and mother had died—the father tragically, struck down by an explosion in his laboratory; the mother piously, like a very saint. It was there, too, in that same bed, that Guillaume had nursed Pierre, when, after their mother's death, the latter had nearly died; and it was there now that Pierre in his turn was nursing Guillaume. All helped to bow them down and fill them with emotion: the strange circumstances of their meeting, the frightful catastrophe which had caused them such a shock, the mysteriousness of the things which remained unexplained between them. And now that after so long a separation they were tragically brought together again, they both felt their memory awaking. The old house spoke to them of their childhood, of their parents dead and gone, of the far-away days when they had loved and suffered there. Beneath the window lay the garden, now icy cold, which once, under the sunbeams, had re-echoed with their play. On the left was the laboratory, the spacious room where their father had taught them to read. On the right, in the dining-room, they could picture their mother cutting bread and butter for them, and looking so gentle with her big, despairing eyes—those of a believer mated to an infidel. And the feeling that they were now alone in that home, and the pale, sleepy gleam of the lamp, and the deep silence of the garden and the house, and the very past itself, all filled them with the softest of emotion blended with the keenest bitterness.

<sup>1</sup> See M. Zola's "Lourdes," Day I., Chapter II.

They would have liked to talk and unbosom themselves. But what could they say to one another? Although their hands remained so tightly clasped, did not the most impassable of chasms separate them? In any case, they thought so. Guillaume was convinced that Pierre was a saint, a priest of the most robust faith, without a doubt, without aught in common with himself, whether in the sphere of ideas or in that of practical life. A hatchet-stroke had parted them, and each lived in a different world. And in the same way Pierre pictured Guillaume as one who had lost caste, whose conduct was most suspicious, who had never even married the mother of his three children, but was on the point of marrying that girl who was far too young for him, and who had come nobody knew whence. In him, moreover, were blended the passionate ideas of a *savant* and a revolutionist, ideas in which one found negation of everything, acceptance and possibly provocation of the worst forms of violence, with a glimpse of the vague monster of Anarchism underlying all. And so, on what basis could there be any understanding between them, since each retained his prejudices against the other, and saw him on the opposite side of the chasm, without possibility of any plank being thrown across it to enable them to unite? Thus, all alone in that room, their poor hearts bled with distracted brotherly love.

Pierre knew that, on a previous occasion, Guillaume had narrowly escaped being compromised in an Anarchist affair. He asked him no questions, but he could not help reflecting that he would not have

hidden himself in this fashion had he not feared arrest for complicity. Complicity with Salvat? Was he really an accomplice? Pierre shuddered, for the only materials on which he could found a contrary opinion were, on one hand, the words that had escaped his brother after the crime, the cry he had raised accusing Salvat of having stolen a cartridge from him; and, on the other hand, his heroic rush into the doorway of the Duvillard mansion in order to extinguish the match. A great deal still remained obscure; but if a cartridge of that frightful explosive had been stolen from Guillaume the fact must be that he manufactured such cartridges and had others at home. Of course, even if he were not an accomplice, the injury to his wrist had made it needful for him to disappear. Given his bleeding hand, and the previous suspicions levelled against him, he would never have convinced anybody of his innocence. And yet, even allowing for these surmises, the affair remained wrapt in darkness: a crime on Guillaume's part seemed a possibility, and to Pierre it was all dreadful to think of.

Guillaume, by the trembling of his brother's moist, yielding hand, must in some degree have realised the prostration of his poor mind, already shattered by doubt and finished off by this calamity. Indeed, the sepulchre was empty now, the very ashes had been swept out of it.

"My poor little Pierre," the elder brother slowly said. "Forgive me if I do not tell you anything. I cannot do so. And besides, what would be the use of it? We should certainly not understand one another. . . . So let us keep from saying anything, and let us

simply enjoy the delight of being together and loving one another in spite of all."

Pierre raised his eyes, and for a long time their glances lingered, one fixed on the other. "Ah!" stammered the priest, "how frightful it all is!"

Guillaume, however, had well understood the mute inquiry of Pierre's eyes. His own did not waver but replied boldly, beaming with purity and loftiness. "I can tell you nothing. Yet, all the same, let us love each other, my little Pierre."

And then Pierre for a moment felt that his brother was above all base anxiety, above the guilty fear of the man who trembles for himself. In lieu thereof he seemed to be carried away by the passion of some great design, the noble thought of concealing some sovereign idea, some secret which it was imperative for him to save. But, alas! this was only the fleeting vision of a vague hope; for all vanished, and again came the doubt, the suspicion, of a mind dealing with one that it knew nothing of.

And all at once a souvenir, a frightful spectacle, arose before Pierre's eyes and distracted him: "Did you see, brother," he stammered, "did you see that fair-haired girl lying under the archway, ripped open, with a smile of astonishment on her face?"

Guillaume in his turn quivered, and in a low and dolorous voice replied: "Yes, I saw her! Ah, poor little thing! Ah! the atrocious necessities, the atrocious errors, of justice!"

Then, amidst the frightful shudder that seemed to sweep by, Pierre, with his horror of all violence, succumbed, and let his face sink upon the counterpane

at the edge of the bed. And he sobbed distractedly: a sudden attack of weakness, overflowing in tears, cast him there exhausted, with no more strength than a child. It was as if all his sufferings since the morning, the deep grief with which universal injustice and woe inspired him, were bursting forth in that flood of tears which nothing now could stay. And Guillaume, who, to calm his little brother, had set his hand upon his head, in the same way as he had often caressingly stroked his hair in childhood's days, likewise felt upset and remained silent, unable to find a word of consolation, resigned, as he was, to the eruption which in life is always possible, the cataclysm by which the slow evolution of nature is always liable to be precipitated. But how hard a fate for the wretched ones whom the lava sweeps away in millions! And then his tears also began to flow amidst the profound silence.

"Pierre," he gently exclaimed at last, "you must have some dinner. Go, go and have some. And screen the lamp; leave me by myself, and let me close my eyes. It will do me good."

Pierre had to content him. Still, he left the dining-room door open; and, weak for want of food, though he had not hitherto noticed it, he ate standing, with his ears on the alert, listening lest his brother should complain or call him. And the silence seemed to have become yet more complete, the little house sank, as it were, into annihilation, instinct with all the melancholy charm of the past.

At about half-past eight, when Sophie returned from her errand to Montmartre, Guillaume heard her step,

light though it was. And he at once became restless and wanted to know what news she brought. It was Pierre, however, who enlightened him. "Don't be anxious. Sophie was received by an old lady who, after reading your note, merely answered, 'Very well.' She did not even ask Sophie a question, but remained quite composed without sign of curiosity."

Guillaume, realising that this fine serenity perplexed his brother, thereupon replied with similar calmness: "Oh! it was only necessary that grandmother should be warned. She knows well enough that if I don't return home it is because I can't."

However, from that moment it was impossible for the injured man to rest. Although the lamp was hidden away in a corner, he constantly opened his eyes, glanced round him, and seemed to listen, as if for sounds from the direction of Paris. And it at last became necessary for the priest to summon the servant and ask her if she had noticed anything strange on her way to or from Montmartre. She seemed surprised by the question, and answered that she had noticed nothing. Besides, the cab had followed the outer boulevards, which were almost deserted. A slight fog had again begun to fall, and the streets were steeped in icy dampness.

By the time it was nine o'clock Pierre realised that his brother would never be able to sleep if he were thus left without news. Amidst his growing feverishness the injured man experienced keen anxiety, a haunting desire to know if Salvat were arrested and had spoken out. He did not confess this; indeed he sought to convey the impression that he had no per-



sonal disquietude, which was doubtless true. But his great secret was stifling him, he shuddered at the thought that his lofty scheme, all his labour and all his hope, should be at the mercy of that unhappy man whom want had filled with delusions and who had sought to set justice upon earth by the aid of a bomb. And in vain did the priest try to make Guillaume understand that nothing certain could yet be known. He perceived that his impatience increased every minute, and at last resolved to make some effort to satisfy him.

But where could he go, of whom could he inquire? Guillaume, while talking and trying to guess with whom Salvat might have sought refuge, had mentioned Janzen, the Princess de Harn's mysterious lover, and for a moment he had even thought of sending to this man for information. But he reflected that if Janzen had heard of the explosion he was not at all the individual to wait for the police at home.

Meantime Pierre repeated: "I will willingly go to buy the evening papers for you—but there will certainly be nothing in them. Although I know almost everyone in Neuilly I can think of nobody who is likely to have any information, unless perhaps it were Bache——"

"You know Bache, the municipal councillor?" interrupted Guillaume.

"Yes, we have both had to busy ourselves with charitable work in the neighbourhood."

"Well, Bache is an old friend of mine, and I know no safer man. Pray go to him and bring him back with you."

A quarter of an hour later Pierre returned with Bache, who resided in a neighbouring street. And it was not only Bache whom he brought with him, for, much to his surprise, he had found Janzen at Bache's house. As Guillaume had suspected, Janzen, while dining at the Princess de Harn's, had heard of the crime, and had consequently refrained from returning to his little lodging in the Rue des Martyrs, where the police might well have set a trap for him. His connections were known, and he was aware that he was watched and was liable at any moment to arrest or expulsion as a foreign Anarchist. And so he had thought it prudent to solicit a few days' hospitality of Bache, a very upright and obliging man, to whom he entrusted himself without fear. He would never have remained with Rosemonde, that adorable lunatic who for a month past had been exhibiting him as her lover, and whose useless and dangerous extravagance of conduct he fully realised.

Guillaume was so delighted on seeing Bache and Janzen that he wished to sit up in bed again. But Pierre bade him remain quiet, rest his head on the pillows, and speak as little as possible. Then, while Janzen stood near, erect and silent, Bache took a chair and sat down by the bedside with many expressions of friendly interest. He was a stout man of sixty, with a broad, full face, a large white beard and long white hair. His little, gentle eyes had a dim, dreamy expression, while a pleasant, hopeful smile played round his thick lips. His father, a fervent St. Simonian, had brought him up in the doctrines of that belief. While retaining due respect for it, however, his per-

sonal inclinations towards orderliness and religion had led him to espouse the ideas of Fourier, in such wise that one found in him a succession and an abridgment, so to say, of two doctrines. Moreover, when he was about thirty, he had busied himself with spiritualism. Possessed of a comfortable little fortune, his only adventure in life had been his connection with the Paris Commune of 1871. How or why he had become a member of it he could now scarcely tell. Condemned to death by default, although he had sat among the Moderates, he had resided in Belgium until the amnesty; and since then Neuilly had elected him as its representative on the Paris Municipal Council, less by way of glorifying in him a victim of reaction than as a reward for his worthiness, for he was really esteemed by the whole district.

Guillaume, with his desire for tidings, was obliged to confide in his two visitors, tell them of the explosion and Salvat's flight, and how he himself had been wounded while seeking to extinguish the match. Janzen, with curly beard and hair, and a thin, fair face such as painters often attribute to the Christ, listened coldly, as was his wont, and at last said slowly in a gentle voice: "Ah! so it was Salvat! I thought it might be little Mathis — I'm surprised that it should be Salvat — for he hadn't made up his mind." Then, as Guillaume anxiously inquired if he thought that Salvat would speak out, he began to protest: "Oh! no; oh! no."

However, he corrected himself with a gleam of disdain in his clear, harsh eyes: "After all, there's no telling. Salvat is a man of sentiment."

Then Bache, who was quite upset by the news of the explosion, tried to think how his friend Guillaume, to whom he was much attached, might be extricated from any charge of complicity should he be denounced. And Guillaume, at sight of Janzen's contemptuous coldness, must have suffered keenly, for the other evidently believed him to be trembling, tortured by the one desire to save his own skin. But what could he say, how could he reveal the deep concern which rendered him so feverish without betraying the secret which he had hidden even from his brother?

However, at this moment Sophie came to tell her master that M. Théophile Morin had called with another gentleman. Much astonished by this visit at so late an hour, Pierre hastened into the next room to receive the new comers. He had become acquainted with Morin since his return from Rome, and had helped him to introduce a translation of an excellent scientific manual, prepared according to the official programmes, into the Italian schools<sup>1</sup>. A Franc-Comtois by birth, a compatriot of Proudhon, with whose poor family he had been intimate at Besançon, Morin, himself the son of a journeyman clockmaker, had grown up with Proudhonian ideas, full of affection for the poor and an instinctive hatred of property and wealth. Later on, having come to Paris as a school teacher, impassioned by study, he had given his whole mind to Auguste Comte. Beneath the fervent Positivist, however, one might yet find the old Proudhonian, the pauper who rebelled and detested want. Moreover, it

<sup>1</sup> See M. Zola's "Rome," Chapters IV. and XVI.

was scientific Positivism that he clung to; in his hatred of all mysticism he would have naught to do with the fantastic religious leanings of Comte in his last years. And in Morin's brave, consistent, somewhat mournful life, there had been but one page of romance: the sudden feverish impulse which had carried him off to fight in Sicily by Garibaldi's side. Afterwards he had again become a petty professor in Paris, obscurely earning a dismal livelihood.

When Pierre returned to the bed-room he said to his brother in a tone of emotion: "Morin has brought me Barthès, who fancies himself in danger and asks my hospitality."

At this Guillaume forgot himself and became excited: "Nicholas Barthès, a hero with a soul worthy of antiquity. Oh! I know him; I admire and love him. You must set your door open wide for him."

Bache and Janzen, however, had glanced at one another smiling. And the latter, with his cold ironical air, slowly remarked: "Why does Monsieur Barthès hide himself? A great many people think he is dead; he is simply a ghost who no longer frightens anybody."

Four and seventy years of age as he now was, Barthès had spent nearly half a century in prison. He was the eternal prisoner, the hero of liberty whom each successive Government had carried from citadel to fortress. Since his youth he had been marching on amidst his dream of fraternity, fighting for an ideal Republic based on truth and justice, and each and every endeavour had led him to a dungeon; he had invariably finished his humanitarian reverie under

bolts and bars. Carbonaro, Republican, evangelical sectarian, he had conspired at all times and in all places, incessantly struggling against the Power of the day, whatever it might be. And when the Republic at last had come, that Republic which had cost him so many years of gaol, it had, in its own turn, imprisoned him, adding fresh years of gloom to those which already had lacked sunlight. And thus he remained the martyr of freedom. freedom which he still desired in spite of everything; freedom, which, strive as he might, never came, never existed

“But you are mistaken,” replied Guillaume, wounded by Janzen’s raillery “There is again a thought of getting rid of Barthès, whose uncompromising rectitude disturbs our politicians; and he does well to take his precautions!”

Nicholas Barthès came in, a tall, slim, withered old man, with a nose like an eagle’s beak, and eyes that still burned in their deep sockets, under white and bushy brows. His mouth, toothless but still refined, was lost to sight between his moustaches and snowy beard; and his hair, crowning him whitely like an aureola, fell in curls over his shoulders. Behind him with all modesty came Théophile Morin, with grey whiskers, grey, brush-like hair, spectacles, and yellow, weary mein—that of an old professor exhausted by years of teaching. Neither of them seemed astonished or awaited an explanation on finding that man in bed with an injured wrist. And there were no introductions. those who were acquainted merely smiled at one another.

Barthès, for his part, stooped and kissed Guillaume

on both cheeks "Ah!" said the latter, almost gaily, "it gives me courage to see you."

However, the new comers had brought a little information. The boulevards were in an agitated state, the news of the crime had spread from café to café, and everybody was anxious to see the late edition which one paper had published giving a very incorrect account of the affair, full of the most extraordinary details. Briefly, nothing positive was as yet known.

On seeing Guillaume turn pale Pierre compelled him to lie down again, and even talked of taking the visitors into the next room. But the injured man gently replied. "No, no, I promise you that I won't stir again, that I won't open my mouth. But stay there and chat together. I assure you that it will do me good to have you near me and hear you."

Then, under the sleepy gleams of the lamp, the others began to talk in undertones. Old Barthès, who considered that bomb to be both idiotic and abominable, spoke of it with the stupefaction of one who, after fighting like a hero through all the legendary struggles for liberty, found himself belated, out of his element, in a new era, which he could not understand. Did not the conquest of freedom suffice for everything? he added. Was there any other problem beyond that of founding the real Republic? Then, referring to Mège and his speech in the Chamber that afternoon, he bitterly arraigned Collectivism, which he declared to be one of the democratic forms of tyranny. Théophile Morin, for his part, also spoke against the Collectivist enrolling of the social forces, but he professed yet greater hatred of the odious

violence of the Anarchists; for it was only by evolution that he expected progress, and he felt somewhat indifferent as to what political means might bring about the scientific society of to-morrow. And in like way Bache did not seem particularly fond of the Anarchists, though he was touched by the idyllic dream, the humanitarian hope, whose germs lay beneath their passion for destruction. And, like Barthès, he also flew into a passion with Mège, who since entering the Chamber had become, said he, a mere rhetorician and theorist, dreaming of dictatorship. Meantime Janzen, still erect, his face frigid and his lips curling ironically, listened to all three of them, and vented a few trenchant words to express his own Anarchist faith, the uselessness of drawing distinctions, and the necessity of destroying everything in order that everything might be rebuilt on fresh lines.

Pierre, who had remained near the bed, also listened with passionate attention. Amidst the downfall of his own beliefs, the utter void which he felt within him, here were these four men, who represented the cardinal points of this century's ideas, debating the very same terrible problem which brought him so much suffering, that of the new belief which the democracy of the coming century awaits. And, ah! since the days of the immediate ancestors, since the days of Voltaire and Diderot and Rousseau how incessantly had billows of ideas followed and jostled one another, the older ones giving birth to new ones, and all breaking and bounding in a tempest in which it was becoming so difficult to distinguish anything clearly! Whence



came the wind, and whither was the ship of salvation going, for what port ought one to embark? Pierre had already thought that the balance-sheet of the century ought to be drawn up, and that, after accepting the legacies of Rousseau and the other precursors, he ought to study the ideas of St Simon, Fourier and even Cabet; of Auguste Comte, Proudhon and Karl Marx as well, in order, at any rate, to form some idea of the distance that had been travelled, and of the cross-ways which one had now reached. And was not this an opportunity, since chance had gathered those men together in his house, living exponents of the conflicting doctrines which he wished to examine?

On turning round, however, he perceived that Guillaume was now very pale and had closed his eyes. Had even he, with his faith in science, felt the doubt which is born of contradictory theories, and the despair which comes when one sees the fight for truth resulting in growth of error?

"Are you in pain?" the priest anxiously inquired.

"Yes, a little. But I will try to sleep."

At this they all went off with silent handshakes. Nicholas Barthès alone remained in the house and slept in a room on the first floor which Sophie had got ready for him. Pierre, unwilling to quit his brother, dozed off upon a sofa. And the little house relapsed into its deep quietude, the silence of solitude and winter, through which passed the melancholy quiver of the souvenirs of childhood.

In the morning, as soon as it was seven o'clock, Pierre had to go for the newspapers. Guillaume

had passed a bad night and intense fever had set in. Nevertheless, his brother was obliged to read him the articles on the explosion. There was an amazing medley of truths and inventions, of precise information lost amidst the most unexpected extravagance. Sagnier's paper, the "*Voix du Peuple*," distinguished itself by its sub-titles in huge print and a whole page of particulars jumbled together chance-wise. It had at once decided to postpone the famous list of the thirty-two deputies and senators compromised in the African Railways affair, and there was no end to the details it gave of the aspect of the entrance to the Duvillard mansion after the explosion: the pavement broken up, the upper floor rent open, the huge doors torn away from their hinges. Then came the story of the Baron's son and daughter preserved as by a miracle, the landau escaping the slightest injury, while the banker and his wife, it was alleged, owed their preservation to the circumstance that they had lingered at the Madeleine after Monseigneur Martha's remarkable address there. An entire column was given to the one victim, the poor, pretty, fair-haired errand girl, whose identity did not seem to be clearly established, although a flock of reporters had rushed first to the modiste employing her, in the Avenue de l'Opéra, and next to the upper part of the Faubourg St. Denis, where it was thought her grandmother resided. Then, in a gravely worded article in "*Le Globe*," evidently inspired by Fonsèque, an appeal was made to the Chamber's patriotism to avoid giving cause for any ministerial crisis in the painful circumstances through which the country was

passing Thus the ministry might last, and live in comparative quietude, for a few weeks longer

Guillaume, however, was struck by one point only. the culprit was not known; Salvat, it appeared certain, was neither arrested nor even suspected. It seemed, indeed, as if the police were starting on a false scent—that of a well-dressed gentleman wearing gloves, whom a neighbour swore he had seen entering the mansion at the moment of the explosion. Thus Guillaume became a little calmer. But his brother read to him from another paper some particulars concerning the engine of destruction that had been employed. It was a preserved-meat can, and the fragments of it showed that it had been comparatively small. And Guillaume relapsed into anxiety on learning that people were much astonished at the violent ravages of such a sorry appliance, and that the presence of some new explosive of incalculable power was already suspected.

At eight o'clock Bertheroy put in an appearance. Although he was sixty-eight, he showed as much briskness and sprightliness as any young sawbones calling in a friendly way to perform a little operation. He had brought an instrument case, some linen bands and some lint. However, he became angry on finding the injured man nervous, flushed and hot with fever.

"Ah! I see that you haven't been reasonable, my dear child," said he. "You must have talked too much, and have bestirred and excited yourself." Then, having carefully probed the wound, he added, while dressing it: "The bone is injured, you know,

and I won't answer for anything unless you behave better. Any complications would make amputation necessary."

Pierre shuddered, but Guillaume shrugged his shoulders, as if to say that he might just as well be amputated since all was crumbling around him Bertheroy, who had sat down, lingering there for another moment, scrutinised both brothers with his keen eyes. He now knew of the explosion, and must have thought it over. "My dear child," he resumed in his brusque way, "I certainly don't think that you committed that abominable act of folly in the Rue Godot-de-Mauroy. But I fancy that you were in the neighbourhood—no, no, don't answer me, don't defend yourself. I know nothing and desire to know nothing, not even the formula of that devilish powder of which your shirt cuff bore traces, and which has wrought such terrible havoc"

And then as the brothers remained surprised, turning cold with anxiety, in spite of his assurances, he added with a sweeping gesture. "Ah! my friends, I regard such an action as even more useless than criminal! I only feel contempt for the vain agitation of politics, whether they be revolutionary or conservative. Does not science suffice? Why hasten the times when one single step of science brings humanity nearer to the goal of truth and justice than do a hundred years of politics and social revolt? Why, it is science alone which sweeps away dogmas, casts down gods, and creates light and happiness. And I, Member of the Institute as I am, decorated and possessed of means, I am the only true Revolutionist."

Then he began to laugh and Guillaume realised all the good-natured irony of his laugh. While admiring him as a great *savant*, he had hitherto suffered at seeing him lead such a *bourgeois* life, accepting whatever appointments and honours were offered him, a Republican under the Republic, but quite ready to serve science under no matter what master. But now, from beneath this opportunist, this hieratical *savant*, this toiler who accepted wealth and glory from all hands, there appeared a quiet yet terrible evolutionist, who certainly expected that his own work would help to ravage and renew the world !

However, Bertheroy rose and took his leave. "I'll come back ; behave sensibly, and love one another as well as you can."

When the brothers again found themselves alone, Pierre seated at Guillaume's bedside, their hands once more sought each other and met in a burning clasp instinct with all their anguish. How much threatening mystery and distress there was both around and within them ! The grey wintry daylight came into the room, and they could see the black trees in the garden, while the house remained full of quivering silence, save that overhead a faint sound of footsteps was audible. They were the steps of Nicholas Barthès, the heroic lover of freedom, who, rising at day-break, had, like a caged lion, resumed his wonted promenade, the incessant coming and going of one who had ever been a prisoner. And as the brothers ceased listening to him their eyes fell on a newspaper which had remained open on the bed, a newspaper soiled by a sketch in outline which pretended to

portray the poor dead errand girl, lying, ripped open, beside the bandbox and the bonnet it had contained. It was so frightful, so atrociously hideous a scene, that two big tears again fell upon Pierre's cheeks, whilst Guillaume's blurred, despairing eyes gazed wistfully far away, seeking for the Future.

## II

### A HOME OF INDUSTRY

THE little house in which Guillaume had dwelt for so many years, a home of quietude and hard work, stood in the pale light of winter up yonder at Montmartre, peacefully awaiting his return. He reflected, however, after *déjeuner* that it might not be prudent for him to go back thither for some three-weeks, and so he thought of sending Pierre to explain the position of affairs. "Listen, brother," he said. "You must render me this service. Go and tell them the truth—that I am here, slightly injured, and do not wish them to come to see me, for fear lest somebody should follow them and discover my retreat. After the note I wrote them last evening they would end by getting anxious if I did not send them some news." Then, yielding to the one worry which, since the previous night, had disturbed his clear, frank glance, he added: "Just feel in the right-hand pocket of my waistcoat; you will find a little key there. Good! that's it. Now you must give it to Madame Leroi, my mother-in-law, and tell her that if any misfortune should happen to me, she is to do what is understood between us. That will suffice, she will understand you."

At the first moment Pierre had hesitated; but he saw how even the slight effort of speaking exhausted

his brother, so he silenced him, saying: "Don't talk, but put your mind at ease. I will go and reassure your people, since you wish that this commission should be undertaken by me."

Truth to tell, the errand was so distasteful to Pierre that he had at first thought of sending Sophie in his place. All his old prejudices were reviving; it was as if he were going to some ogre's den. How many times had he not heard his mother say "that creature!" in referring to the woman with whom her elder son cohabited. Never had she been willing to kiss Guillaume's boys, the whole connection had shocked her, and she was particularly indignant that Madame Leroi, the woman's mother, should have joined the household for the purpose of bringing up the little ones. Pierre retained so strong a recollection of all this that even nowadays, when he went to the basilica of the Sacred Heart and passed the little house on his way, he glanced at it distrustfully, and kept as far from it as he could, as if it were some abode of vice and error. Undoubtedly, for ten years now, the boys' mother had been dead, but did not another scandal-inspiring creature dwell there, that young orphan girl to whom his brother had given shelter, and whom he was going to marry, although a difference of twenty years lay between them? To Pierre all this was contrary to propriety, abnormal and revolting, and he pictured a home given over to social rebellion, where lack of principle led to every kind of disorder.

However, he was leaving the room to start upon his journey, when Guillaume called him back. "Tell Madame Leroi," said he, "that if I should die you



will let her know of it, so that she may immediately do what is necessary."

"Yes, yes," answered Pierre "But calm yourself, and don't move about. I'll say everything. And in my absence Sophie will stop here with you in case you should need her."

Having given full instructions to the servant, Pierre set out to take a tramcar, intending to alight from it on the Boulevard de Rochechouart, and then climb the height on foot. And on the road, lulled by the gliding motion of the heavy vehicle, he began to think of his brother's past life and connections, with which he was but vaguely, imperfectly, acquainted. It was only at a later date that details of everything came to his knowledge. In 1850 a young professor named Leroi, who had come from Paris to the college of Montauban with the most ardent republican ideas, had there married Agathe Dagnan, the youngest of the five girls of an old Protestant family from the Cévennes. Young Madame Leroi was *enceinte* when her husband, threatened with arrest for contributing some violent articles to a local newspaper, immediately after the "Coup d'État," found himself obliged to seek refuge at Geneva. It was there that the young couple's daughter, Marguerite, a very delicate child, was born in 1852. For seven years, that is until the Amnesty of 1859, the household struggled with poverty, the husband giving but a few ill-paid lessons, and the wife absorbed in the constant care which the child required. Then, after their return to Paris, their ill-luck became even greater. For a long time the ex-professor vainly sought regular employment; it was

denied him on account of his opinions, and he had to run about giving lessons in private houses. When he was at last on the point of being received back into the University a supreme blow, an attack of paralysis, fell upon him. He lost the use of both legs. And then came utter misery, every kind of sordid drudgery, the writing of articles for dictionaries, the copying of manuscripts, and even the addressing of newspaper wrappers, on the fruits of which the household barely contrived to live, in a little lodging in the Rue Monsieur-le-Prince.

It was there that Marguerite grew up. Leroi, embittered by injustice and suffering, predicted the advent of a Republic which would avenge the follies of the Empire, and a reign of science which would sweep away the deceptive and cruel divinity of religious dogmas. On the other hand, Agathe's religious faith had collapsed at Geneva, at sight of the narrow and imbecile practices of Calvinism, and all that she retained of it was the old Protestant leaven of rebellion. She had become at once the head and the arm of the house; she went for her husband's work, took it back when completed, and even did much of it herself, whilst, at the same time, performing her house duties, and rearing and educating her daughter. The latter, who attended no school, was indebted for all she learnt to her father and mother, on whose part there was never any question of religious instruction. Through contact with her husband, Madame Leroi had lost all belief, and her Protestant heredity inclining her to free inquiry and examination, she had arranged for herself a kind of peaceful atheism, based

on paramount principles of human duty and justice, which she applied courageously, irrespective of all social conventionalities. The long iniquity of her husband's fate, the undeserved misfortunes which struck her through him and her daughter, ended by endowing her with wonderful fortitude and devotion, which made her, whether as a judge, a manager, or a consoler, a woman of incomparable energy and nobleness of character.

It was in the Rue Monsieur-le-Prince that Guillaume became acquainted with the Leroi family, after the war of 1870. On the same floor as their little lodging he occupied a large room, where he devoted himself passionately to his studies. At the outset there was only an occasional bow, for Guillaume's neighbours were very proud and very grave, leading their life of poverty in fierce silence and retirement. Then intercourse began with the rendering of little services, such as when the young man procured the ex-professor a commission to write a few articles for a new encyclopædia. But all at once came the catastrophe: Leroi died in his armchair one evening while his daughter was wheeling him from his table to his bed. The two distracted women had not even the money to bury him. The whole secret of their bitter want flowed forth with their tears, and they were obliged to accept the help of Guillaume, who, from that moment, became the necessary confidant and friend. And the thing which was bound to happen did happen, in the most simple and loving manner, permitted by the mother herself, who, full of contempt for a social system which allowed those of good hearts to die of

hunger, refused to admit the necessity of any social tie. Thus there was no question of a regular marriage. One day Guillaume, who was twenty-three years old, found himself mated to Marguerite, who was twenty, both of them handsome, healthy, and strong, adoring one another, loving work, and full of hope in the future.

From that moment a new life began. Since his father's death, Guillaume, who had broken off all intercourse with his mother, had been receiving an allowance of two hundred francs a month. This just represented daily bread; however, he was already doubling the amount by his work as a chemist,—his analyses and researches, which tended to the employment of certain chemical products in industry. So he, and Marguerite installed themselves on the very summit of Montmartre, in a little house, at a rental of eight hundred francs a year, the great convenience of the place being a strip of garden, where one might, later on, erect a wooden workshop. In all tranquillity Madame Leroi took up her abode with the young people, helping them, and sparing them the necessity of keeping a second servant. And at successive intervals of two years, her three grandchildren were born, three sturdy boys: first Thomas, then François, and then Antoine. And in the same way as she had devoted herself to her husband and daughter, and then to Guillaume, so did she now devote herself to the three children. She became "*Mère-Grand*"—an emphatic and affectionate way of expressing the term "*grand-mother*"—for all who lived in the house, the older as well as the younger ones. She there personified

sense, and wisdom, and courage, it was she who was ever on the watch, who directed everything, who was consulted about everything, and whose opinion was always followed. Indeed, she reigned there like an all-powerful queen-mother.

For fifteen years this life went on, a life of hard work and peaceful affection, while the strictest economy was observed in contenting every need of the modest little household. Then Guillaume lost his mother, took his share of the family inheritance, and was able to satisfy his old desire, which was to buy the house he lived in, and build a spacious workshop in the garden. He was even able to build it of bricks, and add an upper story to it. But the work was scarcely finished, and life seemed to be on the point of expanding and smiling on them all, when misfortune returned, and typhoid fever, with brutal force, carried off Marguerite, after a week's illness. She was then five-and-thirty, and her eldest boy, Thomas, was fourteen. Thus Guillaume, distracted by his loss, found himself a widower at thirty-eight. The thought of introducing any unknown woman into that retired home, where all hearts beat in tender unison, was so unbearable to him that he determined to take no other mate. His work absorbed him, and he would know how to quiet both his heart and his flesh. Mère-Grand, fortunately, was still there, erect and courageous; the household retained its queen, and in her the children found a manageress and teacher, schooled in adversity and heroism.

Two years passed; and then came an addition to the family. A young woman, Marie Couturier, the

daughter of one of Guillaume's friends, suddenly entered it. Couturier had been an inventor, a madman with some measure of genius, and had spent a fairly large fortune in attempting all sorts of fantastic schemes. His wife, a very pious woman, had died of grief at it all; and although on the rare occasions when he saw his daughter, he showed great fondness for her and loaded her with presents, he had first placed her in a boarding college, and afterwards left her in the charge of a poor female relative. Remembering her only on his death-bed, he had begged Guillaume to give her an asylum, and find her a husband. The poor relation, who dealt in ladies' and babies' linen, had just become a bankrupt. So, at nineteen, the girl, Marie, found herself a penniless outcast, possessed of nothing save a good education, health and courage. Guillaume would never allow her to run about giving lessons. He took her, in quite a natural way, to help Mère-Grand, who was no longer so active as formerly. And the latter approved the arrangement, well pleased at the advent of youth and gaiety, which would somewhat brighten the household, whose life had been one of much gravity ever since Marguerite's death. Marie would simply be an elder sister; she was too old for the boys, who were still at college, to be disturbed by her presence. And she would work in that house where everybody worked. She would help the little community pending the time when she might meet and love some worthy fellow who would marry her.

Five more years elapsed without Marie consenting to quit that happy home. The sterling education she

had received was lodged in a vigorous brain, which contented itself with the acquirement of knowledge. Yet she had remained very pure and healthy, even very *naive*, maidenly by reason of her natural rectitude. And she was also very much a woman, beautifying and amusing herself with a mere nothing, and ever showing gaiety and contentment. Moreover, she was in no wise of a dreamy nature, but very practical, always intent on some work or other, and only asking of life such things as life could give, without anxiety as to what might lie beyond it. She lovingly remembered her pious mother, who had prepared her for her first Communion in tears, imagining that she was opening heaven's portals to her. But since she had been an orphan she had of her own accord ceased all practice of religion, her good sense revolting and scorning the need of any moral police regulations to make her do her duty. Indeed, she considered such regulations dangerous and destructive of true health. Thus, like *Mère-Grand*, she had come to a sort of quiet and almost unconscious atheism, not after the fashion of one who reasons, but simply like the brave, healthy girl she was, one who had long endured poverty without suffering from it, and believed in nothing save the necessity of effort. She had been kept erect, indeed, by her conviction that happiness was to be found in the normal joys of life, lived courageously. And her happy equilibrium of mind had ever guided and saved her, in such wise that she willingly listened to her natural instinct, saying, with her pleasant laugh, that this was, after all, her best adviser. She rejected two offers of marriage, and on the second

occasion, as Guillaume pressed her to accept, she grew astonished, and inquired if he had had enough of her in the house. She found herself very comfortable, and she rendered service there. So why should she leave and run the risk of being less happy elsewhere, particularly as she was not in love with anybody?

Then, by degrees, the idea of a marriage between Marie and Guillaume presented itself, and indeed what could have been more reasonable and advantageous for all? If Guillaume had not mated again it was for his sons' sake, because he feared that by introducing a stranger to the house he might impair its quietude and gaiety. But now there was a woman among them who already showed herself maternal towards the boys, and whose bright youth had ended by disturbing his own heart. He was still in his prime, and had always held that it was not good for man to live alone, although, personally, thanks to his ardour for work, he had hitherto escaped excessive suffering in his bereavement. However, there was the great difference of ages to be considered; and he would have bravely remained in the background and have sought a younger husband for Marie, if his three big sons and Mère-Grand herself had not conspired to effect his happiness by doing all they could to bring about a marriage which would strengthen every home tie and impart, as it were, a fresh springtide to the house. As for Marie, touched and grateful to Guillaume for the manner in which he had treated her for five years past, she immediately consented with an impulse of sincere affection, in which, she fancied, she could detect love. And at all events, could she act in



a more sensible, reasonable way, base her life on more certain prospects of happiness? So the marriage had been resolved upon, and about a month previously it had been decided that it should take place during the ensuing spring, towards the end of April.

When Pierre, after alighting from the tramcar, began to climb the interminable flights of steps leading to the Rue St Eleuthère, a feeling of uneasiness again came over him at the thought that he was about to enter that suspicious ogre's den where everything would certainly wound and irritate him. Given the letter which Sophie had carried thither on the previous night, announcing that the master would not return, how anxious and upset must all its inmates be! However, as Pierre ascended the final flight and nervously raised his head, the little house appeared to him right atop of the hill, looking very serene and quiet under the bright wintry sun, which had peered forth as if to bestow upon the modest dwelling an affectionate caress.

There was a door in the old garden wall alongside the Rue St. Eleuthère, almost in front of the broad thoroughfare conducting to the basilica of the Sacred Heart; but to reach the house itself one had to skirt the wall and climb to the Place du Tertre, where one found the façade and the entrance. Some children were playing on the Place, which, planted as it was with a few scrubby trees, and edged with humble shops, — a fruiterer's, a grocer's and a baker's, — looked like some square in a small provincial town. In a corner, on the left, Guillaume's dwelling, which had been whitewashed during the previous spring, showed

its bright frontage and five lifeless windows, for all its life was on the other, the garden, side, which overlooked Paris and the far horizon.

Pierre mustered his courage and, pulling a brass knob which glittered like gold, rang the bell. There came a gay, distant jingle; but for a moment nobody appeared, and he was about to ring again, when the door was thrown wide open, revealing a passage which ran right through the house, beyond which appeared the ocean of Paris, the endless sea of house roofs bathed in sunlight. And against this spacious, airy background, stood a young woman of twenty-six, clad in a simple gown of black woolen stuff, half covered by a large blue apron. She had her sleeves rolled up above her elbows, and her arms and hands were still moist with water which she had but imperfectly wiped away.

A moment's surprise and embarrassment ensued. The young woman, who had hastened to the door with laughing mien, became grave and covertly hostile at sight of the visitor's cassock. The priest thereupon realised that he must give his name: "I am Abbé Pierre Froment."

At this the young woman's smile of welcome came back to her. "Oh! I beg your pardon, monsieur—I ought to have recognised you, for I saw you wish Guillaume good day one morning as you passed."

She said Guillaume; she, therefore, must be Marie. And Pierre looked at her in astonishment, finding her very different from what he had imagined. She was only of average height, but she was vigorously, admirably built, broad of hip and broad of shoulder, with

the small firm bosom of an amazon By her erect and easy step, instinct with all the adorable grace of woman in her prime, one could divine that she was strong, muscular and healthy. A brunette, but very white of skin, she had a heavy helm of superb black hair, which she fastened in a negligent way, without any show of coquetry. And under her dark locks, her pure, intelligent brow, her delicate nose and gay eyes appeared full of intense life; whilst the somewhat heavier character of her lower features, her fleshy lips and full chin, bespoke her quiet kindliness. She had surely come on earth as a promise of every form of tenderness, every form of devotion. In a word, she was a true mate for man.

However, with her heavy, straying hair and superb arms, so ingenuous in their nudity, she only gave Pierre an impression of superfluous health and extreme self-assurance. She displeased him and even made him feel somewhat anxious, as if she were a creature different from all others.

"It is my brother Guillaume who has sent me," he said.

At this her face again changed; she became grave and hastened to admit him to the passage. And when the door was closed she answered: "You have brought us news of him, then! I must apologise for receiving you in this fashion. The servants have just finished some washing, and I was making sure if the work had been well done. Pray excuse me, and come in here for a moment, it is perhaps best that I should be the first to know the news."

So saying, she led him past the kitchen to a little

room which served as scullery and wash-house. A tub full of soapy water stood there, and some dripping linen hung over some wooden bars. "And so, Guillaume?" she asked

Pierre then told the truth in simple fashion. that his brother's wrist had been injured; that he himself had witnessed the accident, and that his brother had then sought an asylum with him at Neuilly, where he wished to remain and get cured of his injury in peace and quietness, without even receiving a visit from his sons. While speaking in this fashion, the priest watched the effect of his words on Marie's face. first fright and pity, and then an effort to calm herself and judge things reasonably.

"His letter quite froze me last night," she ended by replying. "I felt sure that some misfortune had happened. But one must be brave and hide one's fear from others. His wrist injured, you say; it is not a serious injury, is it?"

"No; but it is necessary that every precaution should be taken with it."

She looked him well in the face with her big frank eyes, which dived into his own as if to reach the very depths of his being, though at the same time she plainly sought to restrain the score of questions which rose to her lips. "And that is all. he was injured in an accident," she resumed; "he didn't ask you to tell us anything further about it?"

"No, he simply desires that you will not be anxious."

Thereupon she insisted no further, but showed herself obedient and respectful of the decision which

Guillaume had arrived at. It sufficed that he should have sent a messenger to reassure the household — she did not seek to learn any more. And even as she had returned to her work in spite of the secret anxiety in which the letter of the previous evening had left her, so now, with her air of quiet strength, she recovered an appearance of serenity, a quiet smile and clear brave glance.

“Guillaume only gave me one other commission,” resumed Pierre, “that of handing a little key to Madame Leroi.”

“Very good,” Marie answered, “Mère-Grand is here; and, besides, the children must see you. I will take you to them.”

Once more quite tranquil, she examined Pierre without managing to conceal her curiosity, which seemed of rather a kindly nature blended with an element of vague pity. Her fresh white arms had remained bare. In all candour she slowly drew down her sleeves; then took off the large blue apron, and showed herself with her rounded figure, at once robust and elegant, in her modest black gown. He meanwhile looked at her, and most certainly he did not find her to his liking. On seeing her so natural, healthy, and courageous, quite a feeling of revolt arose within him, though he knew not why.

“Will you please follow me, Monsieur l’Abbé?” she said. “We must cross the garden.”

On the ground-floor of the house, across the passage, and facing the kitchen and the scullery, there were two other rooms, a library overlooking the Place du Tertre, and a dining-room whose windows opened into

the garden. The four rooms on the first floor served as bedchambers for the father and the sons. As for the garden, originally but a small one, it had now been reduced to a kind of gravelled yard by the erection of the large workshop at one end of it. Of the former greenery, however, there still remained two huge plum-trees with old knotted trunks, as well as a big clump of lilac-bushes, which every spring were covered with bloom. And in front of the latter Marie had arranged a broad flower-bed, in which she amused herself with growing a few roses, some wallflowers and some mignonette.

With a wave of her hand as she went past, she called Pierre's attention to the black plum-trees and the lilacs and roses, which showed but a few greenish spots, for winter still held the little nook in sleep. "Tell Guillaume," she said, "that he must make haste to get well and be back for the first shoots."

Then, as Pierre glanced at her, she all at once flushed purple. Much to her distress, sudden and involuntary blushes would in this wise occasionally come upon her, even at the most innocent remarks. She found it ridiculous to feel such childish emotion when she had so brave a heart. But her pure maidenly blood had retained exquisite delicacy, such natural and instinctive modesty that she yielded to it perforce. And doubtless she had merely blushed because she feared that the priest might think she had referred to her marriage in speaking of the spring.

"Please go in, Monsieur l'Abbé. The children are there, all three." And forthwith she ushered him into the workshop.

It was a very spacious place, over sixteen feet high, with a brick flooring and bare walls painted an iron grey. A sheet of light, a stream of sunshine, spread to every corner through a huge window facing the south, where lay the immensity of Paris. The Venetian shutters often had to be lowered in the summer to attenuate the great heat. From morn till night the whole family lived here, closely and affectionately united in work. Each was installed as fancy listed, having a particular chosen place. One half of the building was occupied by the father's chemical laboratory, with its stove, experiment tables, shelves for apparatus, glass cases and cupboards for phials and jars. Near all this Thomas, the eldest son, had installed a little forge, an anvil, a vice bench, in fact everything necessary to a working mechanician, such as he had become since taking his bachelor's degree, from his desire to remain with his father and help him with certain researches and inventions. Then, at the other end, the younger brothers, François and Antoine, got on very well together on either side of a broad table which stood amidst a medley of portfolios, nests of drawers and revolving book-stands. François, laden with academical laurels, first on the pass list for the École Normale, had entered that college where young men are trained for university professorships, and was there preparing for his Licentiate degree, while Antoine, who on reaching the third class at the Lycée Condorcet had taken a dislike to classical studies, now devoted himself to his calling as a wood-engraver. And, in the full light under the window, Mère-Grand and Marie likewise had their particular table, where

needlework, embroidery, all sorts of *chiffons* and delicate things lay about near the somewhat rough jumble of retorts, tools and big books

Marie, however, on the very threshold called out in her calm voice, to which she strove to impart a gay and cheering accent: "Children! children! here is Monsieur l'Abbé with news of father!"

Children, indeed! Yet what motherliness she already set in the word as she applied it to those big fellows whose elder sister she had long considered herself to be! At three-and-twenty Thomas was quite a colossus, already bearded and extremely like his father. But although he had a lofty brow and energetic features, he was somewhat slow both in mind and body. And he was also taciturn, almost unsociable, absorbed in filial devotion, delighted with the manual toil which made him a mere workman at his master's orders. François, two years younger than Thomas, and nearly as tall, showed a more refined face, though he had the same large brow and firm mouth, a perfect blending of health and strength, in which the man of intellect, the scientific Norman, could only be detected by the brighter and more subtle sparkle of the eyes. The youngest of the brothers, Antoine, who for his eighteen years was almost as strong as his elders, and promised to become as tall, differed from them by his lighter hair and soft, blue, dreamy eyes, which he had inherited from his mother. It had been difficult, however, to distinguish one from the other when all three were schoolboys at the Lycée Condorcet; and even nowadays people made mistakes unless they saw them side by side, so



as to detect the points of difference which were becoming more marked as age progressed.

On Pierre's arrival the brothers were so absorbed in their work that they did not even hear the door open. And again, as in the case of Marie, the priest was surprised by the discipline and firmness of mind, which amidst the keenest anxiety gave the young fellows strength to take up their daily task. Thomas, who stood at his vice-bench in a blouse, was carefully filing a little piece of copper with rough but skilful hands. François, leaning forward, was writing in a bold, firm fashion, whilst on the other side of the table, Antoine, with a slender graver between his fingers, finished a block for an illustrated newspaper.

However, Marie's clear voice made them raise their heads: "Children, father has sent you some news!"

Then all three with the same impulse hurriedly quitted their work and came forward. One could divine that directly there was any question of their father they were drawn together, blended one with the other, so that but one and the same heart beat in their three broad chests. However, a door at the far end of the workroom opened at that moment, and Mère-Grand, coming from the upper floor where she and Marie had their bedrooms, made her appearance. She had just absented herself to fetch a skein of wool; and she gazed fixedly at the priest, unable to understand the reason of his presence.

Marie had to explain matters. "Mère-Grand," said she, "this is Monsieur l'Abbé Froment, Guillaume's brother; he has come from him."

Pierre on his side was examining the old lady, as-

tonished to find her so erect and full of life at seventy. Her former beauty had left a stately charm on her rather long face; youthful fire still lingered in her brown eyes; and very firm was the contour of her pale lips, which in parting showed that she had retained all her teeth. A few white hairs alone silvered her black tresses, which were arranged in old-time fashion. Her cheeks had but slightly withered, and her deep, symmetrical wrinkles gave her countenance an expression of much nobility, a sovereign air as of a queen-mother, which, tall and slight of stature as she was, and invariably gowned in black woollen stuff, she always retained, no matter how humble her occupation.

"So Guillaume sent you, monsieur," she said; "he is injured, is he not?"

Surprised by this proof of intuition, Pierre repeated his story. "Yes, his wrist is injured—but oh! it's not a case of immediate gravity"

On the part of the three sons, he had divined a sudden quiver, an impulse of their whole beings to rush to the help and defence of their father. And for their sakes he sought words of comfort: "He is with me at Neuilly. And with due care it is certain that no serious complications will arise. He sent me to tell you to be in no wise uneasy about him."

Mère-Grand for her part evinced no fears, but preserved great calmness, as if the priest's tidings contained nothing beyond what she had known already. If anything, she seemed rather relieved, freed from anxiety which she had confided to none. "If he is with you, monsieur," she answered, "he is evidently as comfortable as he can be, and sheltered from all risks.

We were surprised, however, by his letter last night, as it did not explain why he was detained, and we should have ended by feeling frightened. But now everything is satisfactory."

Mère-Grand and the three sons, following Marie's example, asked no explanations. On a table near at hand Pierre noticed several morning newspapers lying open and displaying column after column of particulars about the crime. The sons had certainly read these papers, and had feared lest their father should be compromised in that frightful affair. How far did their knowledge of the latter go? They must be ignorant of the part played by Salvat. It was surely impossible for them to piece together all the unforeseen circumstances which had brought about their father's meeting with the workman, and then the crime. Mère-Grand, no doubt, was in certain respects better informed than the others. But they, the sons and Marie, neither knew nor sought to know anything. And thus what a wealth of respect and affection there was in their unshakable confidence in the father, in the tranquillity they displayed directly he sent them word that they were not to be anxious about him!

"Madame," Pierre resumed, "Guillaume told me to give you this little key, and to remind you to do what he charged you to do, if any misfortune should befall him."

She started, but so slightly that it was scarcely perceptible; and taking the key she answered as if some ordinary wish on the part of a sick person were alone in question. "Very well. Tell him that his wishes shall be carried out." Then she added, "But pray take a seat, monsieur."

Pierre, indeed, had remained standing. However, he now felt it necessary to accept a chair, desirous as he was of hiding the embarrassment which he still felt in this house, although he was *en famille* there. Marie, who could not live without occupation for her fingers, had just returned to some embroidery, some of the fine needlework which she stubbornly executed for a large establishment dealing in baby-linen and bridal *trousseaux*; for she wished at any rate to earn her own pocket-money, she often said with a laugh. Mère-Grand, too, from habit, which she followed even when visitors were present, had once more started on her perpetual stocking-mending; while François and Antoine had again seated themselves at their table; and Thomas alone remained on his legs, leaning against his bench. All the charm of industrious intimacy pervaded the spacious, sun-lit room.

"But we'll all go to see father to-morrow," Thomas suddenly exclaimed.

Before Pierre could answer Marie raised her head. "No, no," said she, "he does not wish any of us to go to him; for if we should be watched and followed we should betray the secret of his retreat. Isn't that so, Monsieur l'Abbé?"

"It would indeed be prudent of you to deprive yourselves of the pleasure of embracing him until he himself can come back here. It will be a matter of some two or three weeks," answered Pierre.

Mère-Grand at once expressed approval of this. "No doubt," said she. "Nothing could be more sensible."

So the three sons did not insist, but bravely accepted

the secret anxiety in which they must for a time live, renouncing the visit which would have caused them so much delight, because their father bade them do so and because his safety depended perhaps on their obedience.

However, Thomas resumed. "Then, Monsieur l'Abbé, will you please tell him that as work will be interrupted here, I shall return to the factory during his absence. I shall be more at ease there for the researches on which we are engaged."

"And please tell him from me," put in François, "that he mustn't worry about my examination. Things are going very well. I feel almost certain of success"

Pierre promised that he would forget nothing. However, Marie raised her head, smiling and glancing at Antoine, who had remained silent with a far-away look in his eyes. "And you, little one," said she, "don't you send him any message?"

Emerging from a dream, the young fellow also began to smile. "Yes, yes, a message that you love him dearly, and that he's to make haste back for you to make him happy."

At this they all became merry, even Marie, who in lieu of embarrassment showed a tranquil gaiety born of confidence in the future. Between her and the young men there was naught but happy affection. And a grave smile appeared even on the pale lips of Mère-Grand, who likewise approved of the happiness which life seemed to be promising.

Pierre wished to stay a few minutes longer. They all began to chat, and his astonishment increased.

He had gone from surprise to surprise in this house where he had expected to find that equivocal, disorderly life, that rebellion against social laws, which destroy morality. But instead of this he had found loving serenity, and such strong discipline that life there partook of the gravity, almost the austerity, of convent life, tempered by youth and gaiety. The vast room was redolent of industry and quietude, warm with bright sunshine. However, what most particularly struck him was the Spartan training, the bravery of mind and heart among those sons who allowed nothing to be seen of their personal feelings, and did not presume to judge their father, but remained content with his message, ready to await events, stoical and silent, while carrying on their daily tasks. Nothing could be more simple, more dignified, more lofty. And there was also the smiling heroism of Mère-Grand and Marie, those two women who slept over that laboratory where terrible preparations were manipulated, and where an explosion was always possible.

However, such courage, orderliness and dignity merely surprised Pierre, without touching him. He had no cause for complaint, he had received a polite greeting if not an affectionate one; but then he was as yet only a stranger there, a priest. In spite of everything, however, he remained hostile, feeling that he was in a sphere where none of his own torments could be shared or even divined. How did these folks manage to be so calm and happy amidst their religious unbelief, their sole faith in science, and in presence of that terrifying Paris which spread before

them the boundless sea, the growling abomination of its injustice and its want? As this thought came to him he turned his head and gazed at the city through the huge window, whence it stretched away, ever present, ever living its giant life. And at that hour, under the oblique sun-rays of the winter afternoon, all Paris was speckled with luminous dust, as if some invisible sower, hidden amidst the glory of the planet, were fast scattering seed which fell upon every side in a stream of gold. The whole field was covered with it; for the endless chaos of house roofs and edifices seemed to be land in tilth, furrowed by some gigantic plough. And Pierre in his uneasiness, stirred, despite everything, by an invincible need of hope, asked himself if this was not a good sowing, the furrows of Paris strewn with light by the divine sun for the great future harvest, that harvest of truth and justice of whose advent he had despaired.

At last he rose and took his leave, promising to return at once, if there should be any bad news. It was Marie who showed him to the front door. And there another of those childish blushes which worried her so much suddenly rose to her face, just as she, in her turn, also wished to send her loving message to the injured man. However, with her gay, candid eyes fixed on those of the priest, she bravely spoke the words: "*Au revoir, Monsieur l'Abbé.* Tell Guillaume that I love him and await him."

### III

#### PENURY AND TOIL

THREE days went by, and every morning Guillaume, confined to his bed and consumed by fever and impatience, experienced fresh anxiety directly the newspapers arrived. Pierre had tried to keep them from him, but Guillaume then worried himself the more, and so the priest had to read him column by column all the extraordinary articles that were published respecting the crime.

Never before had so many rumours inundated the press. Even the "Globe," usually so grave and circumspect, yielded to the general *furor*, and printed whatever statements reached it. But the more unscrupulous papers were the ones to read. The "Voix du Peuple" in particular made use of the public feverishness to increase its sales. Each morning it employed some fresh device, and printed some frightful story of a nature to drive people mad with terror. It related that not a day passed without Baron Duvillard receiving threatening letters of the coarsest description, announcing that his wife, his son and his daughter would all be killed, that he himself would be butchered in turn, and that do what he might his house would none the less be blown up. And as a



measure of precaution the house was guarded day and night alike by a perfect army of plain-clothes officers. Then another article contained an amazing piece of invention. Some anarchists, after carrying barrels of powder into a sewer near the Madeleine, were said to have undermined the whole district, planning a perfect volcano there, into which one half of Paris would sink. And at another time it was alleged that the police were on the track of a terrible plot which embraced all Europe, from the depths of Russia to the shores of Spain. The signal for putting it into execution was to be given in France, and there would be a three days' massacre, with grape shot sweeping everyone off the Boulevards, and the Seine running red, swollen by a torrent of blood. Thanks to these able and intelligent devices of the Press, terror now reigned in the city; frightened foreigners fled from the hotels *en masse*; and Paris had become a mere mad-house, where the most idiotic delusions at once found credit.

It was not all this, however, that worried Guillaume. He was only anxious about Salvat and the various new "scents" which the newspaper reporters attempted to follow up. The engineer was not yet arrested, and, so far indeed, there had been no statement in print to indicate that the police were on his track. At last, however, Pierre one morning read a paragraph which made the injured man turn pale.

"Dear me! It seems that a tool has been found among the rubbish at the entrance of the Duvillard mansion. It is a bradawl, and its handle bears the name of Grandidier, which is that of a man who keeps

some well-known metal works. He is to appear before the investigating magistrate to-day "

Guillaume made a gesture of despair. "Ah!" said he, "they are on the right track at last. That tool must certainly have been dropped by Salvat. He worked at Grandidier's before he came to me for a few days. And from Grandidier they will learn all that they need to know in order to follow the scent."

Pierre then remembered that he had heard the Grandidier factory mentioned at Montmartre. Guillaume's eldest son, Thomas, had served his apprenticeship there, and even worked there occasionally nowadays.

"You told me," resumed Guillaume, "that during my absence Thomas intended to go back to the factory. It's in connection with a new motor which he's planning, and has almost hit upon. If there should be a perquisition there, he may be questioned, and may refuse to answer, in order to guard his secret. So he ought to be warned of this, warned at once!"

Without trying to extract any more precise statement from his brother, Pierre obligingly offered his services. "If you like," said he, "I will go to see Thomas this afternoon. Perhaps I may come across Monsieur Grandidier himself and learn how far the affair has gone, and what was said at the investigating magistrate's "

With a moist glance and an affectionate grasp of the hand, Guillaume at once thanked Pierre: "Yes, yes, brother, go there, it will be good and brave of you."

"Besides," continued the priest, "I really wanted to go to Montmartre to-day. I haven't told you so, but

something has been worrying me. If Salvat has fled, he must have left the woman and the child all alone up yonder. On the morning of the day when the explosion took place I saw the poor creatures in such a state of destitution, such misery, that I can't think of them without a heart-pang. Women and children so often die of hunger when the man is no longer there."

At this, Guillaume, who had kept Pierre's hand in his own, pressed it more tightly, and in a trembling voice exclaimed "Yes, yes, and that will be good and brave too. Go there, brother, go there."

That house of the Rue des Saules, that horrible home of want and agony, had lingered in Pierre's memory. To him it was like an embodiment of the whole filthy *cloaca*, in which the poor of Paris suffer unto death. And on returning thither that afternoon, he found the same slimy mud around it; its yard littered with the same filth, its dark, damp stairways redolent of the same stench of neglect and poverty, as before. In winter time, while the fine central districts of Paris are dried and cleansed, the far-away districts of the poor remain gloomy and miry, beneath the everlasting tramp of the wretched ones who dwell in them.

Remembering the staircase which conducted to Salvat's lodging, Pierre began to climb it amidst a loud screaming of little children, who suddenly became quiet, letting the house sink into death-like silence once more. Then the thought of Laveuve, who had perished up there like a stray dog, came back to Pierre. And he shuddered when, on the top landing,

he knocked at Salvat's door, and profound silence alone answered him. Not a breath was to be heard.

However, he knocked again, and as nothing stirred he began to think that nobody could be there. Perhaps Salvat had returned to fetch the woman and the child, and perhaps they had followed him to some humble nook abroad. Still this would have astonished him; for the poor seldom quit their homes, but die where they have suffered. So he gave another and a gentle knock.

And at last a faint sound, the light tread of little feet, was heard amidst the silence. Then a weak, childish voice ventured to inquire: "Who is there?"

"Monsieur l'Abbé."

The silence fell again, nothing more stirred. There was evidently hesitation on the other side.

"Monsieur l'Abbé who came the other day," said Pierre again.

This evidently put an end to all uncertainty, for the door was set ajar and little Céline admitted the priest. "I beg your pardon, Monsieur l'Abbé," said she, "but Mamma Théodore has gone out, and she told me not to open the door to anyone."

Pierre had, for a moment, imagined that Salvat himself was hiding there. But with a glance he took in the whole of the small bare room, where man, woman and child dwelt together. At the same time, Madame Théodore doubtless feared a visit from the police. Had she seen Salvat since the crime? Did she know where he was hiding? Had he come back there to embrace and tranquillise them both?

"And your papa, my dear," said Pierre to Céline, "isn't he here either?"

"Oh! no, monsieur, he has gone away."

"What, gone away?"

"Yes, he hasn't been home to sleep, and we don't know where he is."

"Perhaps he's working

"Oh, no! he'd send us some money if he was."

"Then he's gone on a journey, perhaps?"

"I don't know."

"He wrote to Mamma Théodore, no doubt?"

"I don't know."

Pierre asked no further questions. In fact, he felt somewhat ashamed of his attempt to extract information from this child of eleven, whom he thus found alone. It was quite possible that she knew nothing, that Salvat, in a spirit of prudence, had even refrained from sending any tidings of himself. Indeed, there was an expression of truthfulness on the child's fair, gentle and intelligent face, which was grave with the gravity that extreme misery imparts to the young.

"I am sorry that Mamma Théodore isn't here," said Pierre, "I wanted to speak to her."

"But perhaps you would like to wait for her, Monsieur l'Abbé. She has gone to my Uncle Toussaint's in the Rue Marcadet; and she can't stop much longer, for she's been away more than an hour."

Thereupon Céline cleared one of the chairs on which lay a handful of scraps of wood, picked up on some waste ground.

The bare and fireless room was assuredly also a breadless one. Pierre could divine the absence of

the bread-winner, the disappearance of the man who represents will and strength in the home, and on whom one still relies even when weeks have gone by without work. He goes out and scours the city, and often ends by bringing back the indispensable crust which keeps death at bay. But with his disappearance comes complete abandonment, the wife and child in danger, destitute of all prop and help.

Pierre, who had sat down and was looking at that poor, little, blue-eyed girl, to whose lips a smile returned in spite of everything, could not keep from questioning her on another point. "So you don't go to school, my child?" said he.

She faintly blushed and answered: "I've no shoes to go in."

He glanced at her feet, and saw that she was wearing a pair of ragged old list-slippers, from which her little toes protruded, red with cold.

"Besides," she continued, "Mamma Théodore says that one doesn't go to school when one's got nothing to eat. Mamma Théodore wanted to work but she couldn't, because her eyes got burning hot and full of water. And so we don't know what to do, for we've had nothing left since yesterday, and if Uncle Toussaint can't lend us twenty sous it'll be all over."

She was still smiling in her unconscious way, but two big tears had gathered in her eyes. And the sight of the child shut up in that bare room, apart from all the happy ones of earth, so upset the priest that he again felt his anger with want and misery awakening. Then, another ten minutes having elapsed,

he became impatient, for he had to go to the Grand-dier works before returning home

"I don't know why Mamma Théodore doesn't come back," repeated Céline "Perhaps she's chatting." Then, an idea occurring to her she continued: "I'll take you to my Uncle Toussaint's, Monsieur l'Abbé, if you like. It's close by, just round the corner."

"But you have no shoes, my child."

"Oh! that don't matter, I walk all the same."

Thereupon he rose from the chair and said simply: "Well, yes, that will be better, take me there. And I'll buy you some shoes."

Céline turned quite pink, and then made haste to follow him after carefully locking the door of the room like a good little housewife, though, truth to tell, there was nothing worth stealing in the place.

In the meantime it had occurred to Madame Théodore that before calling on her brother Toussaint to try to borrow a franc from him, she might first essay her luck with her younger sister, Hortense, who had married little Chrétiennot, the clerk, and occupied a flat of four rooms on the Boulevard de Rochechouart. This was quite an affair, however, and the poor woman only made the venture because Céline had been fasting since the previous day.

Eugène Toussaint, the mechanician, a man of fifty, was her stepbrother, by the first marriage contracted by her father. A young dressmaker whom the latter had subsequently wedded, had borne him three daughters, Pauline, Léonie and Hortense. And on his death, his son Eugène, who already had a wife and child of his own, had found himself for a short time with his

stepmother and sisters on his hands. The stepmother, fortunately, was an active and intelligent woman, and knew how to get out of difficulties. She returned to her former workroom where her daughter Pauline was already apprenticed, and she next placed Léonie there; so that Hortense, the youngest girl, who was a spoilt child, prettier and more delicate than her sisters, was alone left at school. And, later on, — after Pauline had married Labitte the stonemason, and Léonie, Salvat the journeyman-engineer, — Hortense, while serving as assistant at a confectioner's in the Rue des Martyrs, there became acquainted with Chrétiennot, a clerk, who married her. Léonie had died young, only a few weeks after her mother; Pauline, forsaken by her husband, lived with her brother-in-law Salvat, and Hortense alone wore a light silk gown on Sundays, resided in a new house, and ranked as a *bourgeoise*, at the price, however, of interminable worries and great privation.

Madame Théodore knew that her sister was generally short of money towards the month's end, and therefore felt rather ill at ease in thus venturing to apply for a loan. Chrétiennot, moreover, embittered by his own mediocrity, had of late years accused his wife of being the cause of their spoilt life, and had ceased all intercourse with her relatives. Toussaint, no doubt, was a decent workman, but that Madame Théodore who lived in misery with her brother-in-law, and that Salvat who wandered from workshop to workshop like an incorrigible ranter whom no employer would keep; those two, with their want and dirt and rebellion, had ended by incensing the vain little clerk, who was not only a great stickler for the proprieties, but was soured by



all the difficulties he encountered in his own life. And thus he had forbidden Hortense to receive her sister.

All the same, as Madame Théodore climbed the carpeted staircase of the house on the Boulevard Rochechouart, she experienced a certain feeling of pride at the thought that she had a relation living in such luxury. The Chrétiennot's rooms were on the third floor, and overlooked the courtyard. Their *femme-de-ménage* — a woman who goes out by the day or hour charring, cleaning and cooking — came back every afternoon about four o'clock to see to the dinner, and that day she was already there. She admitted the visitor, though she could not conceal her anxious surprise at her boldness in calling in such slatternly garb. However, on the very threshold of the little *salon*, Madame Théodore stopped short in wonderment herself, for her sister Hortense was sobbing and crouching on one of the armchairs, upholstered in blue repp, of which she was so proud.

"What is the matter? What has happened to you?" asked Madame Théodore.

Her sister, though scarcely two-and-thirty, was no longer "the beautiful Hortense" of former days. She retained a doll-like appearance, with a tall slim figure, pretty eyes and fine, fair hair. But she who had once taken so much care of herself, had now come down to dressing-gowns of doubtful cleanliness. Her eyelids, too, were reddening, and blotches were appearing on her skin. She had begun to fade after giving birth to two daughters, one of whom was now nine and the other seven years of age. Very proud and egotistical, she herself had begun to regret her

marriage, for she had formerly considered herself a real beauty, worthy of the palaces and equipages of some Prince Charming. And at this moment she was plunged in such despair, that her sister's sudden appearance on the scene did not even astonish her: "Ah! it's you," she gasped "Ah! if you only knew what a blow's fallen on me in the middle of all our worries!"

Madame Théodore at once thought of the children, Lucienne and Marcelle. "Are your daughters ill?" she asked.

"No, no, our neighbour has taken them for a walk on the Boulevard. But the fact is, my dear, I'm *enceinte*, and when I told Chrétiennot of it after *déjeuner*, he flew into a most fearful passion, saying the most dreadful, the most cruel things!"

Then she again sobbed. Gentle and indolent by nature, desirous of peace and quietness before anything else, she was incapable of deceiving her husband, as he well knew. But the trouble was that an addition to the family would upset the whole economy of the household.

"*Mon Dieu!*" said Madame Théodore at last, "you brought up the others, and you'll bring up this one too."

At this an explosion of anger dried the other's eyes; and she rose, exclaiming: "You are good, you are! One can see that our purse isn't yours. How are we to bring up another child when we can scarcely make both ends meet as it is?"

And thereupon, forgetting the *bourgeois* pride which usually prompted her to silence or falsehood, she freely explained their embarrassment, the horrid pecu-

niary worries which made their life a perpetual misery. Their rent amounted to 700 francs,<sup>1</sup> so that out of the 3000 francs<sup>2</sup> which the husband earned at his office, barely a couple of hundred were left them every month. And how were they to manage with that little sum, provide food and clothes, keep up their rank and so forth? There was the indispensable black coat for monsieur, the new dress which madame must have at regular intervals, under penalty of losing caste, the new boots which the children required almost every month, in fact, all sorts of things that could not possibly be dispensed with. One might strike a dish or two out of the daily *menu*, and even go without wine; but evenings came when it was absolutely necessary to take a cab. And, apart from all this, one had to reckon with the wastefulness of the children, the disorder in which the discouraged wife left the house, and the despair of the husband, who was convinced that he would never extricate himself from his difficulties, even should his salary some day be raised to as high a figure as 4000 francs. Briefly, one here found the unbearable penury of the petty clerk, with consequences as disastrous as the black want of the artisan: the mock façade and lying luxury; all the disorder and suffering which lie behind intellectual pride at not earning one's living at a bench or on a scaffolding.

"Well, well," repeated Madame Théodore, "you can't kill the child."

"No, of course not; but it's the end of everything," answered Hortense, sinking into the armchair again.

<sup>1</sup> \$140.

<sup>2</sup> \$600.

"What will become of us, *mon Dieu!* What will become of us!" Then she collapsed in her unbuttoned dressing gown, tears once more gushing from her red and swollen eyes

Much vexed that circumstances should be so unpropitious, Madame Théodore nevertheless ventured to ask for the loan of twenty sous; and this brought her sister's despair and confusion to a climax. "I really haven't a centime in the house," said she, "just now I borrowed ten sous for the children from the servant. I had to get ten francs from the Mont de Piété on a little ring the other day. And it's always the same at the end of the month. However, Chrétiennot will be paid to-day, and he's coming back early with the money for dinner. So if I can I will send you something to-morrow."

At this same moment the servant hastened in with a distracted air, being well aware that monsieur was in no wise partial to madame's relatives. "Oh madame, madame!" said she; "here's monsieur coming up the stairs."

"Quick then, quick, go away!" cried Hortense, "I should only have another scene if he met you here To-morrow, if I can, I promise you."

To avoid Chrétiennot who was coming in, Madame Théodore had to hide herself in the kitchen. As he passed, she just caught sight of him, well dressed as usual in a tight-fitting frock-coat. Short and lean, with a thin face and long and carefully tended beard, he had the bearing of one who is both vain and quarrelsome. Fourteen years of office life had withered him, and now the long evening hours which he spent at a neighbouring café were finishing him off.

When Madame Théodore had quitted the house she turned with dragging steps towards the Rue Marcadet where the Toussaints resided. Here, again, she had no great expectations, for she well knew what ill-luck and worry had fallen upon her brother's home. During the previous autumn Toussaint, though he was but fifty, had experienced an attack of paralysis which had laid him up for nearly five months. Prior to this mishap he had borne himself bravely, working steadily, abstaining from drink, and bringing up his three children in true fatherly fashion. One of them, a girl, was now married to a carpenter, with whom she had gone to Le Havre, while of the others, both boys — one a soldier, had been killed in Tonquin, and the other Charles, after serving his time in the army, had become a working mechanician. Still, Toussaint's long illness had exhausted the little money which he had in the Savings Bank, and now that he had been set on his legs again, he had to begin life once more without a copper before him.

Madame Théodore found her sister-in-law alone in the cleanly kept room which she and her husband occupied. Madame Toussaint was a portly woman, whose corpulence increased in spite of everything, whether it were worry or fasting. She had a round puffy face with bright little eyes; and was a very worthy woman, whose only faults were an inclination for gossiping and a fondness for good cheer. Before Madame Théodore even opened her mouth she understood the object of her visit. "You've come on us at a bad moment, my dear," she said, "we're stumped. Toussaint wasn't able to go back to the works till the

day before yesterday, and he'll have to ask for an advance this evening."

As she spoke, she looked at the other with no great sympathy, hurt as she felt by her slovenly appearance. "And Salvat," she added, "is he still doing nothing?"

Madame Théodore doubtless foresaw the question, for she quietly lied: "He isn't in Paris, a friend has taken him off for some work over Belgium way, and I'm waiting for him to send us something."

Madame Toussaint still remained distrustful, however: "Ah!" she said, "it's just as well that he shouldn't be in Paris; for with all these bomb affairs we couldn't help thinking of him, and saying that he was quite mad enough to mix himself up in them."

The other did not even blink. If she knew anything she kept it to herself.

"But you, my dear, can't you find any work?" continued Madame Toussaint.

"Well, what would you have me do with my poor eyes? It's no longer possible for me to sew."

"That's true. A seamstress gets done for. When Toussaint was laid up here I myself wanted to go back to my old calling as a needlewoman. But there! I spoilt everything and did no good. Charring's about the only thing that one can always do. Why don't you get some jobs of that kind?"

"I'm trying, but I can't find any"

Little by little Madame Toussaint was softening at sight of the other's miserable appearance. She made her sit down, and told her that she would give her something if Toussaint should come home with money. Then, yielding to her partiality for gossiping, since

there was somebody to listen to her, she started telling stories. The one affair, however, on which she invariably harped was the sorry business of her son Charles and the servant girl at a wine shop over the way. Before going into the army Charles had been a most hard-working and affectionate son, invariably bringing his pay home to his mother. And certainly he still worked and showed himself good-natured; but military service, while sharpening his wits, had taken away some of his liking for ordinary manual toil. It wasn't that he regretted army life, for he spoke of his barracks as a prison. Only his tools had seemed to him rather heavy when, on quitting the service, he had been obliged to take them in hand once more.

"And so, my dear," continued Madame Toussaint, "it's all very well for Charles to be kind-hearted, he can do no more for us. I knew that he wasn't in a hurry to get married, as it costs money to keep a wife. And he was always very prudent, too, with girls. But what would you have? There was that moment of folly with that Eugénie over the road, a regular baggage who's already gone off with another man, and left her baby behind. Charles has put it out to nurse, and pays for it every month. And a lot of expense it is too, perfect ruination. Yes, indeed, every possible misfortune has fallen on us."

In this wise Madame Toussaint rattled on for a full half hour. Then seeing that waiting and anxiety had made her sister-in-law turn quite pale, she suddenly stopped short. "You're losing patience, eh?" she exclaimed. "The fact is, that Toussaint won't be back for some time. Shall we go to the works together?"

I'll easily find out if he's likely to bring any money home."

They then decided to go down, but at the bottom of the stairs they lingered for another quarter of an hour chatting with a neighbour who had lately lost a child. And just as they were at last leaving the house they heard a call: "Mamma! mamma!"

It came from little Céline, whose face was beaming with delight. She was wearing a pair of new shoes and devouring a cake. "Mamma," she resumed, "Monsieur l'Abbé who came the other day wants to see you. Just look! he bought me all this!"

On seeing the shoes and the cake, Madame Théodore understood matters. And when Pierre, who was behind the child, accosted her she began to tremble and stammer thanks. Madame Toussaint on her side had quickly drawn near, not indeed to ask for anything herself, but because she was well pleased at such a God-send for her sister-in-law, whose circumstances were worse than her own. And when she saw the priest slip ten francs into Madame Théodore's hand she explained to him that she herself would willingly have lent something had she been able. Then she promptly started on the stories of Toussaint's attack and her son Charles's ill-luck.

But Céline broke in: "I say, mamma, the factory where papa used to work is here in this street, isn't it? Monsieur l'Abbé has some business there."<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Although the children of the French peasantry almost invariably address their parents as "father" and "mother," those of the working classes of Paris, and some other large cities, usually employ the terms "papa" and "mamma" — *Trans*



"The Grandidier factory," resumed Madame Toussaint; "well, we were just going there, and we can show Monsieur l'Abbé the way"

It was only a hundred steps off. Escorted by the two women and the child, Pierre slackened his steps and tried to extract some information about Salvat from Madame Théodore. But she at once became very prudent. She had not seen him again, she declared; he must have gone with a mate to Belgium, where there was a prospect of some work. From what she said, it appeared to the priest that Salvat had not dared to return to the Rue des Saules since his crime, in which all had collapsed, both his past life of toil and hope, and his recent existence with its duties towards the woman and the child.

"There's the factory, Monsieur l'Abbé," suddenly said Madame Toussaint, "my sister-in-law won't have to wait now, since you've been kind enough to help her. Thank you for her and for us."

Madame Théodore and Céline likewise poured forth their thanks, standing beside Madame Toussaint in the everlasting mud of that populous district, amidst the jostling of the passers-by. And lingering there as if to see Pierre enter, they again chatted together and repeated that, after all, some priests were very kind.

The Grandidier works covered an extensive plot of ground. Facing the street there was only a brick building with narrow windows and a great archway, through which one espied a long courtyard. But, in the rear, came a suite of habitations, workshops, and sheds, above whose never ending roofs arose the two

lofty chimneys of the generators. From the very threshold one detected the rumbling and quivering of machinery, all the noise and bustle of work. Black water flowed by at one's feet, and up above white vapour spurted from a slender pipe with a regular strident puff, as if it were the very breath of that huge, toiling hive.

. Bicycles were now the principal output of the works. When Grandidier had taken them on leaving the Dijon Arts and Trades School, they were declining under bad management, slowly building some little motive engines by the aid of antiquated machinery. Foreseeing the future, however, he had induced his elder brother, one of the managers of the Bon Marché, to finance him, on the promise that he would supply that great emporium with excellent bicycles at 150 francs apiece. And now quite a big venture was in progress, for the Bon Marché was already bringing out the new popular machine "La Lisette," the "Bicycle for the Multitude," as the advertisements asserted. Nevertheless, Grandidier was still in all the throes of a great struggle, for his new machinery had cast a heavy burden of debt on him. At the same time each month brought its effort, the perfecting or simplifying of some part of the manufacture, which meant a saving in the future. He was ever on the watch; and even now was thinking of reverting to the construction of little motors, for he thought he could divine in the near future the triumph of the motor-car.

On asking if M. Thomas Froment were there, Pierre was led by an old workman to a little shed, where he found the young fellow in the linen jacket of a

mechanician, his hands black with filings. He was adjusting some piece of mechanism, and nobody would have suspected him to be a former pupil of the Lycée Condorcet, one of the three clever Froments who had there rendered the name famous. But his only desire had been to act as his father's faithful servant, the arm that forges, the embodiment of the manual toil by which conceptions are realised. And, a giant of three-and-twenty, ever attentive and courageous, he was likewise a man of patient, silent and sober nature.

On catching sight of Pierre he quivered with anxiety and sprang forward. "Father is no worse?" he asked.

"No, no. But he read in the papers that story of a bradawl found in the Rue Godot-de-Mauroy, and it made him anxious, because the police may make a perquisition here."

Thomas, his own anxiety allayed, began to smile. "Tell him he may sleep quietly," he responded. "To begin with, I've unfortunately not yet hit on our little motor such as I want it to be. In fact, I haven't yet put it together. I'm keeping the pieces at our house, and nobody here knows exactly what I come to do at the factory. So the police may search, it will find nothing. Our secret runs no risk."

Pierre promised to repeat these words to Guillaume, so as to dissipate his fears. However, when he tried to sound Thomas, and ascertain the position of affairs, what the factory people thought of the discovery of the bradawl, and whether there was as yet any suspicion of Salvat, he once more found the young man taciturn,

and elicited merely a "yes" or a "no" in answer to his inquiries. The police had not been there as yet? No. But the men must surely have mentioned Salvat? Yes, of course, on account of his Anarchist opinions. But what had Grandidier, the master, said on returning from the investigating magistrate's? As for that Thomas knew nothing. He had not seen Grandidier that day.

"But here he comes!" the young man added. "Ah! poor fellow, his wife, I fancy, had another attack this morning."

He alluded to a frightful story which Guillaume had already recounted to Pierre. Grandidier, falling in love with a very beautiful girl, had married her; but for five years now she had been insane: the result of puerperal fever and the death of an infant son. Her husband, with his ardent affection for her, had been unwilling to place her in an asylum, and had accordingly kept her with him in a little pavilion, whose windows, overlooking the courtyard of the factory, always remained closed. She was never seen; and never did he speak of her to anybody. It was said that she was usually like a child, very gentle and very sad, and still beautiful, with regal golden hair. At times, however, attacks of frantic madness came upon her, and he then had to struggle with her, and often hold her for hours in his arms to prevent her from splitting her head against the walls. Fearful shrieks would ring out for a time, and then death-like silence would fall once more.

Grandidier came into the shed where Thomas was working. A handsome man of forty, with an ener-

getic face, he had a dark and heavy moustache, brush-like hair and clear eyes. He was very partial to Thomas, and during the young fellow's apprenticeship there, had treated him like a son. And he now let him return thither whenever it pleased him, and placed his appliances at his disposal. He knew that he was trying to devise a new motor, a question in which he himself was extremely interested; still he evinced the greatest discretion, never questioning Thomas, but awaiting the result of his endeavours.

"This is my uncle, Abbé Froment, who looked in to wish me good day," said the young man, introducing Pierre.

An exchange of polite remarks ensued. Then Grandidier sought to cast off the sadness which made people think him stern and harsh, and in a bantering tone exclaimed. "I didn't tell you, Thomas, of my business with the investigating magistrate. If I hadn't enjoyed a good reputation we should have had all the spies of the Prefecture here. The magistrate wanted me to explain the presence of that bradawl in the Rue Godot-de-Mauroy, and I at once realised that, in his opinion, the culprit must have worked here. For my part I immediately thought of Salvat. But I don't denounce people. The magistrate has my hiring-book, and as for Salvat I simply answered that he worked here for nearly three months last autumn, and then disappeared. They can look for him themselves! Ah! that magistrate! you can picture him: a little fellow with fair hair and cat-like eyes, very careful of his appearance, a society man evidently, but quite frisky at being mixed up in this affair."

"Isn't he Monsieur Amadieu?" asked Pierre.

"Yes, that's his name. Ah! he's certainly delighted with the present which those Anarchists have made him, with that crum of theirs."

The priest listened in deep anxiety. As his brother had feared, the true scent, the first conducting wire, had now been found. And he looked at Thomas to see if he also were disturbed. But the young man was either ignorant of the ties which linked Salvat to his father, or else he possessed great power of self-control, for he merely smiled at Grandidier's sketch of the magistrate.

Then, as Grandidier went to look at the piece of mechanism which Thomas was finishing, and they began to speak about it, Pierre drew near to an open doorway which communicated with a long workshop where engine lathes were rumbling, and the beams of press-drills falling quickly and rhythmically. Leather gearing spun along with a continuous gliding, and there was ceaseless bustle and activity amidst the odoriferous dampness of all the steam. Scores of perspiring workmen, grimy with dust and filings, were still toiling. Still this was the final effort of the day. And as three men approached a water-tap near Pierre to wash their hands, he listened to their talk, and became particularly interested in it when he heard one of them, a tall, ginger-haired fellow, call another Toussaint, and the third Charles.

Toussaint, a big, square-shouldered man with knotty arms, only showed his fifty years on his round, scorched face, which besides being roughened and wrinkled by labour, bristled with grey hairs,

which nowadays he was content to shave off once a week. It was only his right arm that was affected by paralysis, and moved rather sluggishly. As for Charles, a living portrait of his father, he was now in all the strength of his six-and-twentieth year, with splendid muscles distending his white skin, and a full face barred by a heavy black moustache. The three men, like their employer, were speaking of the explosion at the Duvillard mansion, of the bradawl found there, and of Salvat, whom they all now suspected.

"Why, only a brigand would do such a thing!" said Toussaint. "That Anarchism disgusts me. I'll have none of it. But all the same it's for the *bourgeois* to settle matters. If the others want to blow them up, it's their concern. It's they who brought it about."

This indifference was undoubtedly the outcome of a life of want and social injustice; it was the indifference of an old toiler, who, weary of struggling and hoping for improvements, was now quite ready to tolerate the crumbling of a social system, which threatened him with hunger in his impotent old age.

"Well, you know," rejoined Charles, "I've heard the Anarchists talking, and they really say some very true and sensible things. And just take yourself, father; you've been working for thirty years, and isn't it abominable that you should have had to pass through all that you did pass through recently, liable to go off like some old horse that's slaughtered at the first sign of illness? And, of course, it makes me think of myself, and I can't help feeling that it

won't be at all amusing to end like that. And may the thunder of God kill me if I'm wrong, but one feels half inclined to join in their great flare-up if it's really to make everybody happy!"

He certainly lacked the flame of enthusiasm, and if he had come to these views it was solely from impatience to lead a less toilsome life, for obligatory military service had given him ideas of equality among all men—a desire to struggle, raise himself and obtain his legitimate share of life's enjoyments. It was, in fact, the inevitable step which carries each generation a little more forward. There was the father, who, deceived in his hope of a fraternal republic, had grown sceptical and contemptuous; and there was the son advancing towards a new faith, and gradually yielding to ideas of violence, since political liberty had failed to keep its promises.

Nevertheless, as the big, ginger-haired fellow grew angry, and shouted that if Salvat were guilty, he ought to be caught and guillotined at once, without waiting for judges, Toussaint ended by endorsing his opinion. "Yes, yes, he may have married one of my sisters, but I renounce him. . . . And yet, you know, it would astonish me to find him guilty, for he isn't wicked at heart. I'm sure he wouldn't kill a fly."

"But what would you have?" put in Charles. "When a man's driven to extremities he goes mad."

They had now washed themselves; but Toussaint, on perceiving his employer, lingered there in order to ask him for an advance. As it happened, Grandidier, after cordially shaking hands with Pierre, approached



the old workman of his own accord. for he held him in esteem. And, after listening to him, he gave him a line for the cashier on a card. As a rule, he was altogether against the practice of advancing money, and his men disliked him, and said he was over rigid, though in point of fact he had a good heart. But he had his position as an employer to defend, and to him concessions meant ruin. With such keen competition on all sides, with the capitalist system entailing a terrible and incessant struggle, how could one grant the demands of the workers, even when they were legitimate?

Sudden compassion came upon Pierre when, after quitting Thomas, he saw Grandidier, who had finished his round, crossing the courtyard in the direction of the closed pavilion, where all the grief of his heart-tragedy awaited him. Here was that man waging the battle of life, defending his fortune with the risk that his business might melt away amidst the furious warfare between capital and labour; and at the same time, in lieu of evening repose, finding naught but anguish at his hearth: a mad wife, an adored wife, who had sunk back into infancy, and was for ever dead to love! How incurable was his secret despair! Even on the days when he triumphed in his workshops, disaster awaited him at home. And could any more unhappy man, any man more deserving of pity, be found even among the poor who died of hunger, among those gloomy workers, those vanquished sons of labour who hated and who envied him?

When Pierre found himself in the street again he was astonished to see Madame Toussaint and Madame

Théodore still there with little Céline. With their feet in the mud, like bits of wreckage against which beat the ceaseless flow of wayfarers, they had lingered there, still and ever chatting, loquacious and doleful, lulling their wretchedness to rest beneath a deluge of tittle-tattle. And when Toussaint, followed by his son, came out, delighted with the advance he had secured, he also found them on the same spot. Then he told Madame Théodore the story of the bradawl, and the idea which had occurred to him and all his mates that Salvat might well be the culprit. She, however, though turning very pale, began to protest, concealing both what she knew and what she really thought.

"I tell you I haven't seen him for several days," said she. "He must certainly be in Belgium. And as for a bomb, that's humbug. You say yourself that he's very gentle and wouldn't harm a fly!"

A little later as Pierre journeyed back to Neuilly in a tramcar he fell into a deep reverie. All the stir and bustle of that working-class district, the buzzing of the factory, the overflowing activity of that hive of labour, seemed to have lingered within him. And for the first time, amidst his worries, he realised the necessity of work. Yes, it was fatal, but it also gave health and strength. In effort which sustains and saves, he at last found a solid basis on which all might be reared. Was this, then, the first gleam of a new faith? But ah! what mockery! Work an uncertainty, work hopeless, work always ending in injustice! And then wait ever on the watch for the toiler, strangling him as soon as slack times came

round, and casting him into the streets like a dead dog immediately old age set in.

On reaching Neuilly, Pierre found Bertheroy at Guillaume's bedside. The old *savant* had just dressed the injured wrist, and was not yet certain that no complications would arise. "The fact is," he said to Guillaume, "you don't keep quiet. I always find you in a state of feverish emotion which is the worst possible thing for you. You must calm yourself, my dear fellow, and not allow anything to worry you."

A few minutes later, though, just as he was going away, he said with his pleasant smile. "Do you know that a newspaper writer came to interview me about that explosion? Those reporters imagine that scientific men know everything! I told the one who called on me that it would be very kind of *him* to enlighten *me* as to what powder was employed. And, by the way, I am giving a lesson on explosives at my laboratory to-morrow. There will be just a few persons present. You might come as well, Pierre, so as to give an account of it to Guillaume; it would interest him."

At a glance from his brother, Pierre accepted the invitation. Then, Bertheroy having gone, he recounted all he had learnt during the afternoon, how Salvat was suspected, and how the investigating magistrate had been put on the right scent. And at this news, intense fever again came over Guillaume, who, with his head buried in the pillow, and his eyes closed, stammered as if in a kind of nightmare: "Ah! then, this is the end! Salvat arrested, Salvat interrogated! Ah! that so much toil and so much hope should crumble!"

## IV

### CULTURE AND HOPE

ON the morrow, punctually at one o'clock, Pierre reached the Rue d'Ulm, where Bertheroy resided in a fairly large house, which the State had placed at his disposal, in order that he might install in it a laboratory for study and research. Thus the whole first floor had been transformed into one spacious apartment, where, from time to time, the illustrious chemist was fond of receiving a limited number of pupils and admirers, before whom he made experiments, and explained his new discoveries and theories.

For these occasions a few chairs were set out before the long and massive table, which was covered with jars and appliances. In the rear one saw the furnace, while all around were glass cases, full of vials and specimens. The persons present were, for the most part, fellow *savants*, with a few young men, and even a lady or two, and, of course, an occasional journalist. The whole made up a kind of family gathering, the visitors chatting with the master in all freedom.

Directly Bertheroy perceived Pierre he came forward, pressed his hand and seated him on a chair beside Guillaume's son François, who had been one of the first arrivals. The young man was completing his third year at the École Normale, close by, so he

only had a few steps to take to call upon his master Bertheroy, whom he regarded as one of the firmest minds of the age. Pierre was delighted to meet his nephew, for he had been greatly impressed in his favour on the occasion of his visit to Montmartre. François, on his side, greeted his uncle with all the cordial expansiveness of youth. He was, moreover, well pleased to obtain some news of his father.

However, Bertheroy began. He spoke in a familiar and sober fashion, but frequently employed some very happy expressions. At first he gave an account of his own extensive labours and investigations with regard to explosive substances, and related with a laugh that he sometimes manipulated powders which would have blown up the entire district. But, said he, in order to reassure his listeners, he was always extremely prudent. At last he turned to the subject of that explosion in the Rue Godot-de-Mauroy, which, for some days, had filled Paris with dismay. The remnants of the bomb had been carefully examined by experts, and one fragment had been brought to him, in order that he might give his opinion on it. The bomb appeared to have been prepared in a very rudimentary fashion; it had been charged with small pieces of iron, and fired by means of a match, such as a child might have devised. The extraordinary part of the affair was the formidable power of the central cartridge, which, although it must have been a small one, had wrought as much havoc as any thunderbolt. And the question was this: What incalculable power of destruction might one not arrive at if the charge were increased ten, twenty or a hun-

dredfold. Embarrassment began, and divergencies of opinion clouded the issue directly one tried to specify what explosive had been employed. Of the three experts who had been consulted, one pronounced himself in favour of dynamite pure and simple, but the two others, although they did not agree together, believed in some combination of explosive matters. He, Bertheroy, had modestly declined to adjudicate, for the fragment submitted to him bore traces of so slight a character, that analysis became impossible. Thus he was unwilling to make any positive pronouncement. But his opinion was that one found oneself in presence of some unknown powder, some new explosive, whose power exceeded anything that had hitherto been dreamt of. He could picture some unknown *savant*, or some ignorant but lucky inventor, discovering the formula of this explosive under mysterious conditions. And this brought him to the point he wished to reach, the question of all the explosives which are so far unknown, and of the coming discoveries which he could foresee. In the course of his investigations he himself had found cause to suspect the existence of several such explosives, though he had lacked time and opportunity to prosecute his studies in that direction. However, he indicated the field which should be explored, and the best way of proceeding. In his opinion it was there that lay the future. And in a broad and eloquent peroration, he declared that explosives had hitherto been degraded by being employed in idiotic schemes of vengeance and destruction; whereas it was in them possibly that lay the liberating force which science was seeking,

the lever which would change the face of the world, when they should have been so domesticated and subdued as to be only the obedient servants of man.

Throughout this familiar discourse Pierre could feel that François was growing impassioned, quivering at thought of the vast horizon which the master opened up. He himself had become extremely interested, for he could not do otherwise than notice certain allusions, and connect what he heard with what he had guessed of Guillaume's anxiety regarding that secret which he feared to see at the mercy of an investigating magistrate. And so as he, Pierre, before going off with François, approached Bertheroy to wish him good day, he pointedly remarked: "Guillaume will be very sorry that he was unable to hear you unfold those admirable ideas."

The old *savant* smiled. "Pooh!" said he; "just give him a summary of what I said. He will understand. He knows more about the matter than I do."

In presence of the illustrious chemist, François preserved the silent gravity of a respectful pupil, but when he and Pierre had taken a few steps down the street in silence, he remarked: "What a pity it is that a man of such broad intelligence, free from all superstition, and anxious for the sole triumph of truth, should have allowed himself to be classified, ticketed, bound round with titles and academical functions! How greatly our affection for him would increase if he took less State pay, and freed himself from all the grand cordons which tie his hands."

"What would you have!" rejoined Pierre, in a conciliatory spirit. "A man must live! At the same

time I believe that he does not regard himself as tied by anything."

Then, as they had reached the entrance of the École Normale, the priest stopped, thinking that his companion was going back to the college. But François, raising his eyes and glancing at the old place, remarked: "No, no, to-day's Thursday, and I'm at liberty! Oh! we have a deal of liberty, perhaps too much. But for my own part I'm well pleased at it, for it often enables me to go to Montmartre and work at my old little table. It's only there that I feel any real strength and clearness of mind."

His preliminary examinations had entitled him to admission at either the École Polytechnique or the École Normale,<sup>1</sup> and he had chosen the latter, entering its scientific section with No. 1 against his name. His father had wished him to make sure of an avocation, that of professor, even if circumstances should allow him to remain independent and follow his own bent on leaving the college. François, who was very precocious, was now preparing for his last examination there, and the only rest he took was in walking to and from Montmartre, or in strolling through the Luxembourg gardens.

From force of habit he now turned towards the latter, accompanied by Pierre and chatting with him. One found the mildness of springtime there that February afternoon; for pale sunshine streamed

<sup>1</sup> The purposes of the École Normale have been referred to on p 197. At the École Polytechnique young men receive much of the preliminary training which they require to become either artillery officers, or military, naval or civil engineers — *Trans.*



between the trees, which were still leafless. It was indeed one of those first fine days which draw little green gems from the branches of the lilac bushes.

The École Normale was still the subject of conversation and Pierre remarked: "I must own that I hardly like the spirit that prevails there. Excellent work is done, no doubt, and the only way to form professors is to teach men the trade by cramming them with the necessary knowledge. But the worst is that although all the students are trained for the teaching profession, many of them don't remain in it, but go out into the world, take to journalism, or make it their business to control the arts, literature and society. And those who do this are for the most part unbearable. After swearing by Voltaire they have gone back to spirituality and mysticism, the last drawing-room craze. Now that a firm faith in science is regarded as brutish and inelegant, they fancy that they rid themselves of their caste by feigning amiable doubt, and ignorance, and innocence. What they most fear is that they may carry a scent of the schools about with them, so they put on extremely Parisian airs, venture on somersaults and slang, and assume all the grace of dancing bears in their eager desire to please. From that desire spring the sarcastic shafts which they aim at science, they who pretend that they know everything, but who go back to the belief of the humble, the naive idealism of Biblical legends, just because they think the latter to be more distinguished."

François began to laugh: "The portrait is perhaps a little overdrawn," said he, "still there's truth in it, a great deal of truth."

"I have known several of them," continued Pierre, who was growing animated. "And among them all I have noticed that a fear of being duped leads them to reaction against the entire effort, the whole work of the century. Disgust with liberty, distrust of science, denial of the future, that is what they now profess. And they have such a horror of the commonplace that they would rather believe in nothing or the incredible. It may of course be commonplace to say that two and two make four, yet it's true enough; and it is far less foolish for a man to say and repeat it than to believe, for instance, in the miracles of Lourdes."

François glanced at the priest in astonishment. The other noticed it and strove to restrain himself. Nevertheless, grief and anger carried him away whenever he spoke of the educated young people of the time, such as, in his despair, he imagined them to be. In the same way as he had pitied the toilers dying of hunger in the districts of misery and want, so here he overflowed with contempt for the young minds that lacked bravery in the presence of knowledge, and harked back to the consolation of deceptive spirituality, the promise of an eternity of happiness in death, which last was longed for and exalted as the very sum of life. Was not the cowardly thought of refusing to live for the sake of living so as to discharge one's simple duty in being and making one's effort, equivalent to absolute assassination of life? However, the *Ego* was always the mainspring; each one sought personal happiness. And Pierre was grieved to think that those young people, instead of discarding the past and marching on to the truths

of the future, were relapsing into shadowy metaphysics through sheer weariness and idleness, due in part perhaps to the excessive exertion of the century, which had been overladen with human toil.

However, François had begun to smile again. "But you are mistaken," said he; "we are not all like that at the *École Normale*. You only seem to know the Normalians of the Section of Letters, and your opinions would surely change if you knew those of the Section of Sciences. It is quite true that the reaction against Positivism is making itself felt among our literary fellow-students, and that they, like others, are haunted by the idea of that famous bankruptcy of science. This is perhaps due to their masters, the neo-spiritualists and dogmatical rhetoricians into whose hands they have fallen. And it is still more due to fashion, the whim of the times which, as you have very well put it, regards scientific truth as bad taste, something graceless and altogether too brutal for light and distinguished minds. Consequently, a young fellow of any shrewdness who desires to please is perforce won over to the new spirit."

"The new spirit!" interrupted Pierre, unable to restrain himself. "Oh! that is no mere innocent, passing fashion, it is a tactical device and a terrible one, an offensive return of the powers of darkness against those of light, of servitude against free thought, truth and justice."

Then, as the young man again looked at him with growing astonishment, he relapsed into silence. The figure of Monseigneur Martha had risen before his eyes, and he fancied he could again hear the prelate

at the Madeleine, striving to win Paris over to the policy of Rome, to that spurious neo-Catholicism which, with the object of destroying democracy and science, accepted such portions of them as it could adapt to its own views. This was indeed the supreme struggle. Thence came all the poison poured forth to the young. Pierre knew what efforts were being made in religious circles to help on this revival of mysticism, in the mad hope of hastening the rout of science. Monseigneur Martha, who was all-powerful at the Catholic University, said to his intimates, however, that three generations of devout and docile pupils would be needed before the Church would again be absolute sovereign of France.

“Well, as for the *École Normale*,” continued François, “I assure you that you are mistaken. There are a few narrow bigots there, no doubt. But even in the Section of Letters the majority of the students are sceptics at bottom—sceptics of discreet and good-natured average views. Of course they are professors before everything else, though they are a trifle ashamed of it; and, as professors, they judge things with no little pedantic irony, devoured by a spirit of criticism, and quite incapable of creating anything themselves. I should certainly be astonished to see the man of genius whom we await come out of their ranks. To my thinking, indeed, it would be preferable that some barbarian genius, neither well read nor endowed with critical faculty, or power of weighing and shading things, should come and open the next century with a hatchet stroke, sending up a fine flare of truth and reality. . . . But, as for my com-

rades of the Scientific Section, I assure you that neo-Catholicism and Mysticism and Occultism, and every other branch of the fashionable phantasmagoria trouble them very little indeed. They are not making a religion of science, they remain open to doubt on many points; but they are mostly men of very clear and firm minds, whose passion is the acquirement of certainty, and who are ever absorbed in the investigations which continue throughout the whole vast field of human knowledge. They haven't flinched, they have remained Positivists, or Evolutionists, or Determinists, and have set their faith in observation and experiment to help on the final conquest of the world."

François himself was growing excited, as he thus confessed his faith while strolling along the quiet sunlit garden paths. "The young indeed!" he resumed. "Do people know them? It makes us laugh when we see all sorts of apostles fighting for us, trying to attract us, and saying that we are white or black or grey, according to the hue which they require for the triumph of their particular ideas! The young, the real ones, why, they're in the schools, the laboratories and the libraries. It's they who work and who'll bring to-morrow to the world. It's not the young fellows of dinner and supper clubs, manifestoes and all sorts of extravagances. The latter make a great deal of noise, no doubt; in fact, they alone are heard. But if you knew of the ceaseless efforts and passionate striving of the others, those who remain silent, absorbed in their tasks. And I know many of them: they are with their century, they have rejected

none of its hopes, but are marching on to the coming century, resolved to pursue the work of their fore-runners, ever going towards more light and more equity. And just speak to *them* of the bankruptcy of science. They'll shrug their shoulders at the mere idea, for they know well enough that science has never before inflamed so many hearts or achieved greater conquests! It is only if the schools, laboratories and libraries were closed, and the social soil radically changed, that one would have cause to fear a fresh growth of error such as weak hearts and narrow minds hold so dear!"

At this point François's fine flow of eloquence was interrupted. A tall young fellow stopped to shake hands with him; and Pierre was surprised to recognise Baron Duvillard's son Hyacinthe, who bowed to him in very correct style. "What! you here in our old quarter," exclaimed François

"My dear fellow, I'm going to Jonas's, over yonder, behind the Observatory. Don't you know Jonas? Ah! my dear fellow, he's a delightful sculptor, who has succeeded in doing away with matter almost entirely. He has carved a figure of Woman, no bigger than the finger, and entirely soul, free from all baseness of form, and yet complete. All Woman, indeed, in her essential symbolism! Ah! it's grand, it's overpowering. A perfect scheme of æsthetics, a real religion!"

François smiled as he looked at Hyacinthe, buttoned up in his long pleated frock-coat, with his made-up face, and carefully cropped hair and beard. "And yourself?" said he, "I thought you were

working, and were going to publish a little poem, shortly?"

"Oh! the task of creating is so distasteful to me, my dear fellow! A single line often takes me weeks.

. . Still, yes, I have a little poem on hand, 'The End of Woman.' And you see, I'm not so exclusive as some people pretend, since I admire Jonas, who still believes in Woman. His excuse is sculpture, which, after all, is at best such a gross materialistic art. But in poetry, good heavens, how we've been overwhelmed with Woman, always Woman! It's surely time to drive her out of the temple, and cleanse it a little. Ah! if we were all pure and lofty enough to do without Woman, and renounce all those horrid sexual questions, so that the last of the species might die childless, eh? The world would then at least finish in a clean and proper manner!"

Thereupon, Hyacinthe walked off with his languid air, well pleased with the effect which he had produced on the others.

"So you know him?" said Pierre to François.

"He was my school-fellow at Condorcet, we were in the same classes together. Such a funny fellow he was! A perfect dunce! And he was always making a parade of Father Duvillard's millions, while pretending to disdain them, and act the revolutionist, for ever saying that he'd use his cigarette to fire the cartridge which was to blow up the world! He was Schopenhauer, and Nietzsche, and Tolstoi, and Ibsen, rolled into one! And you can see what he has become with it all: a humbug with a diseased mind!"

"It's a terrible symptom," muttered Pierre, "when

through *ennui* or lassitude, or the contagion of destructive fury, the sons of the happy and privileged ones start doing the work of the demolishers ”

François had resumed his walk, going down towards the ornamental water, where some children were sailing their boats. “That fellow is simply grotesque,” he replied, “but how would you have sane people give any heed to that mysticism, that awakening of spirituality which is alleged by the same *doctrinaires* who started the bankruptcy of science cry, when after so brief an evolution it produces such insanity, both in art and literature? A few years of influence have sufficed; and now Satanism, Occultism and other absurdities are flourishing; not to mention that, according to some accounts, the Cities of the Plains are reconciled with new Rome. Isn’t the tree judged by its fruits? And isn’t it evident that, instead of a renaissance, a far-spreading social movement bringing back the past, we are simply witnessing a transitory reaction, which many things explain? The old world would rather not die, and is struggling in a final convulsion, reviving for a last hour before it is swept away by the overflowing river of human knowledge, whose waters ever increase. And yonder, in the future, is the new world, which the real young ones will bring into existence, those who work, those who are not known, who are not heard. And yet, just listen! Perhaps you will hear them, for we are among them, in their ‘quarter.’ This deep silence is that of the labour of all the young fellows who are leaning over their work-tables, and day by day carrying forward the conquest of truth.”



So saying François waved his hand towards all the day-schools and colleges and high schools beyond the Luxembourg garden, towards the Faculties of Law and Medicine, the Institute and its five Academies, the innumerable libraries and museums which made up the broad domain of intellectual labour. And Pierre, moved by it all, shaken in his theories of negation, thought that he could indeed hear a low but far-spreading murmur of the work of thousands of active minds, rising from laboratories, studies and class, reading and lecture rooms. It was not like the jerky, breathless trepidation, the loud clamour of factories where manual labour toils and chafes. But here, too, there were sighs of weariness, efforts as killing, exertion as fruitful in its results. Was it indeed true that the cultured young were still and ever in their silent forge, renouncing no hope, relinquishing no conquest, but in full freedom of mind forging the truth and justice of to-morrow with the invincible hammers of observation and experiment?

François, however, had raised his eyes to the palace clock to ascertain the time. "I'm going to Montmartre," he said; "will you come part of the way with me?"

Pierre assented, particularly, as the young man added that on his way he meant to call for his brother Antoine at the Museum of the Louvre. That bright afternoon the Louvre picture galleries were steeped in warm and dignified quietude, which one particularly noticed on coming from the tumult and scramble of the streets. The majority of the few people one found there were copyists working in deep silence,

which only the wandering footsteps of an occasional tourist disturbed. Pierre and François found Antoine at the end of the gallery assigned to the Primitive masters. With scrupulous, almost devout care he was making a drawing of a figure by Mantegna. The Primitives did not impassion him by reason of any particular mysticism and ideality, such as fashion pretends to find in them, but on the contrary, and justifiably enough, by reason of the sincerity of their ingenuous realism, their respect and modesty in presence of nature, and the minute fidelity with which they sought to transcribe it. He spent days of hard work in copying and studying them, in order to learn strictness and probity of drawing from them—all that lofty distinction of style which they owe to their candour as honest artists.

Pierre was struck by the pure glow which a sitting of good hard work had set in Antoine's light blue eyes. It imparted warmth and even feverishness to his fair face, which was usually all dreaminess and gentleness. His lofty forehead now truly looked like a citadel armed for the conquest of truth and beauty. He was only eighteen, and his story was simply this: as he had grown disgusted with classical studies and been mastered by a passion for drawing, his father had let him leave the Lycée Condorcet when he was in the third class there. Some little time had then elapsed while he felt his way and the deep originality within him was being evolved. He had tried etching on copper, but had soon come to wood engraving, and had attached himself to it in spite of the discredit into which it had fallen, lowered as it had been to the

level of a mere trade. Was there not here an entire art to restore and enlarge? For his own part he dreamt of engraving his own drawings, of being at once the brain which conceives and the hand which executes, in such wise as to obtain new effects of great intensity both as regards perception and touch. To comply with the wishes of his father, who desired each of his sons to have a trade, he earned his bread like other engravers by working for the illustrated newspapers. But, in addition to this current work, he had already engraved several blocks instinct with wonderful power and life. They were simply copies of real things, scenes of everyday existence, but they were accentuated, elevated so to say, by the essential line, with a *maestria* which on the part of so young a lad fairly astonished one.

"Do you want to engrave that?" François asked him, as he placed his copy of Mantegna's figure in his portfolio.

"Oh! no, that's merely a dip into innocence, a good lesson to teach one to be modest and sincere. Life is very different nowadays."

Then, while walking along the streets — for Pierre, who felt growing sympathy for the two young fellows, went with them in the direction of Montmartre, forgetful of all else, — Antoine, who was beside him, spoke expansively of his artistic dreams.

"Colour is certainly a power, a sovereign source of charm, and one may, indeed, say that without colour nothing can be completely represented. Yet, singularly enough, it isn't indispensable to me. It seems to me that I can picture life as intensely and defi-

nately with mere black and white, and I even fancy that I shall be able to do so in a more essential manner, without any of the dupery which lies in colour. But what a task it is! I should like to depict the Paris of to-day in a few scenes, a few typical figures, which would serve as testimony for all time. And I should like to do it with great fidelity and candour, for an artist only lives by reason of his candour, his humility and steadfast belief in Nature, which is ever beautiful. I've already done a few figures, I will show them to you. But ah! if I only dared to tackle my blocks with the graver, at the outset, without drawing my subject beforehand. For that generally takes away one's fire. However, what I do with the pencil is a mere sketch, for with the graver I may come upon a find, some unexpected strength or delicacy of effect. And so I'm draughtsman and engraver all in one, in such a way that my blocks can only be turned out by myself. If the drawings on them were engraved by another, they would be quite lifeless. . . . Yes, life can spring from the fingers just as well as from the brain, when one really possesses creative power."

They walked on, and when they found themselves just below Montmartre, and Pierre spoke of taking a tramcar to return to Neuilly, Antoine, quite feverish with artistic passion, asked him if he knew Jahan, the sculptor, who was working for the Sacred Heart. And on receiving a negative reply, he added: "Well, come and see him for a moment. He has a great future before him. You'll see an angel of his which has been declined."

Then, as François began to praise the angel in question, Pierre agreed to accompany them. On the summit of the height, among all the sheds which the building of the basilica necessitated, Jahan had been able to set up a glazed workshop large enough for the huge angel ordered of him. His three visitors found him there in a blouse, watching a couple of assistants, who were rough-hewing the block of stone whence the angel was to emerge. Jahan was a sturdy man of thirty-six, with dark hair and beard, a large, ruddy mouth and fine bright eyes. Born in Paris, he had studied at the Fine Art School, but his impetuous temperament had constantly landed him in trouble there.

"Ah! yes," said he, "you've come to see my angel, the one which the Archbishop wouldn't take. Well, there it is."

The clay model of the figure, some three feet high, and already drying, looked superb in its soaring posture, with its large, outspread wings expanding as if with passionate desire for the infinite. The body, barely draped, was that of a slim yet robust youth, whose face beamed with the rapture of his heavenly flight.

"They found him too human," said Jahan. "And after all they were right. There's nothing so difficult to conceive as an angel. One even hesitates as to the sex; and when faith is lacking one has to take the first model one finds and copy it and spoil it. For my part, while I was modelling that one, I tried to imagine a beautiful youth suddenly endowed with wings, and carried by the intoxication of his flight into all

the joy of the sunshine. But it upset them, they wanted something more religious, they said, and so then I concocted that wretched thing over there. After all, one has to earn one's living, you know."

So saying, he waved his hand towards another model, the one for which his assistants were preparing the stone. And this model represented an angel of the correct type, with symmetrical wings like those of a goose, a figure of neither sex, and commonplace features, expressing the silly ecstasy that tradition requires.

"What would you have?" continued Jahan. "Religious art has sunk to the most disgusting triteness. People no longer believe; churches are built like barracks, and decorated with saints and virgins fit to make one weep. The fact is that genius is only the fruit of the social soil; and a great artist can only send up a blaze of the faith of the time he lives in. For my part, I'm the grandson of a Beauceron peasant. My father came to Paris to set himself up in business as a marble worker for tombstones and so forth, just at the top of the Rue de la Roquette. It was there I grew up. I began as a workman, and all my childhood was spent among the masses, in the streets, without ever a thought coming to me of setting foot in a church. So few Parisians think of doing so nowadays. And so what's to become of art since there's no belief in the Divinity or even in beauty? We're forced to go forward to the new faith, which is the faith in life and work and fruitfulness, in all that labours and produces."

Then suddenly breaking off he exclaimed: "By the

way, I've been doing some more work to my figure of Fecundity, and I'm fairly well pleased with it. Just come with me and I'll show it you."

Thereupon he insisted on taking them to his private studio, which was near by, just below Guillaume's little house. It was entered by way of the Rue du Calvaire, a street which is simply a succession of ladder-like flights of steps. The door opened on to one of the little landings, and one found oneself in a spacious, well-lighted apartment littered with models and casts, fragments and figures, quite an overflow of sturdy, powerful talent. On a stool was the unfinished model of Fecundity swathed in wet cloths. These Jahan removed, and then she stood forth with her rounded figure, her broad hips and her wifely, maternal bosom, full of the milk which nourishes and redeems.

"Well, what do you think of her?" asked Jahan. "Built as she is, I fancy that her children ought to be less puny than the pale, languid, æsthetic fellows of nowadays!"

While Antoine and François were admiring the figure, Pierre, for his part, took most interest in a young girl who had opened the door to them, and who had now wearily reseated herself at a little table to continue a book she was reading. This was Jahan's sister, Lise. A score of years younger than himself, she was but sixteen, and had been living alone with him since their father's death. Very slight and delicate looking, she had a most gentle face, with fine light hair which suggested pale gold-dust. She was almost a cripple, with legs so weak that she only walked with

difficulty, and her mind also was belated, still full of childish *naïveté*. At first this had much saddened her brother, but with time he had grown accustomed to her innocence and languor. Busy as he always was, ever in a transport, overflowing with new plans, he somewhat neglected her by force of circumstances, letting her live beside him much as she listed.

Pierre had noticed, however, the sisterly impulsiveness with which she had greeted Antoine. And the latter, after congratulating Jahan on his statue, came and sat down beside her, questioned her and wished to see the book which she was reading. During the last six months the most pure and affectionate intercourse had sprung up between them. He, from his father's garden, up yonder on the Place du Tertre, could see her through the huge window of that studio where she led so innocent a life. And noticing that she was always alone, as if forsaken, he had begun to take an interest in her. Then had come acquaintance; and, delighted to find her so simple and so charming, he had conceived the design of rousing her to intelligence and life, by loving her, by becoming at once the mind and the heart whose power fructifies. Weak plant that she was, in need of delicate care, sunshine and affection, he became for her all that her brother had, through circumstances, failed to be. He had already taught her to read, a task in which every mistress had previously failed. But him she listened to and understood. And by slow degrees a glow of happiness came to the beautiful clear eyes set in her irregular face. It was love's miracle, the creation of woman beneath the breath of a young lover who gave



himself entirely. No doubt she still remained very delicate, with such poor health that one ever feared that she might expire in a faint sigh, and her legs, moreover, were still too weak to admit of her walking any distance. But all the same, she was no longer the little wilding, the little ailing flower of the previous spring

Jahan, who marvelled at the incipient miracle, drew near to the young people. "Ah!" said he, "your pupil does you honour. She reads quite fluently, you know, and understands the fine books you send her. You read to me of an evening now, don't you, Lise?"

She raised her candid eyes, and gazed at Antoine with a smile of infinite gratitude. "Oh! whatever he'll teach me," she said, "I'll learn it, and do it."

The others laughed gently. Then, as the visitors were going off, François paused before a model which had cracked while drying. "Oh! that's a spoilt thing," said the sculptor. "I wanted to model a figure of Charity. It was ordered of me by a philanthropic institution. But try as I might, I could only devise something so commonplace that I let the clay spoil. Still, I must think it over and endeavour to take the matter in hand again."

When they were outside, it occurred to Pierre to go as far as the basilica of the Sacred Heart in the hope of finding Abbé Rose there. So the three of them went round by way of the Rue Gabrielle and climbed the steps of the Rue Chape. And just as they were reaching the summit where the basilica reared its forest of scaffoldings beneath the clear sky, they encoun-

tered Thomas, who, on leaving the factory, had gone to give an order to a founder in the Rue Lamarek.

He, who as a rule was so silent and discreet, now happened to be in an expansive mood, which made him look quite radiant. "Ah! I'm so pleased," he said, addressing Pierre, "I fancy that I've found what I want for our little motor. Tell father that things are going on all right, and that he must make haste to get well."

At these words his brothers, François and Antoine, drew close to him with a common impulse. And they stood there all three, a valiant little group, their hearts uniting and beating with one and the same delight at the idea that their father would be gladdened, that the good news they were sending him would help him towards recovery. As for Pierre, who, now that he knew them, was beginning to love them and judge them at their worth, he marvelled at the sight of these three young giants, each so strikingly like the other, and drawn together so closely and so promptly, directly their filial affection took fire.

"Tell him that we are waiting for him, and will come to him at the first sign if we are wanted."

Then each in turn shook the priest's hand vigorously. And while he remained watching them as they went off towards the little house, whose garden he perceived over the wall of the Rue Saint Eleuthère, he fancied he could there detect a delicate silhouette, a white, sunlit face under a helm of dark hair. It was doubtless the face of Marie, examining the buds on her lilac bushes. At that evening hour, however, the diffuse light was so golden that the vision seemed

to fade in it as in a halo. And Pierre, feeling dazzled, turned his head, and on the other side saw naught but the overwhelming, chalky mass of the basilica, whose hugeness shut out all view of the horizon

For a moment he remained motionless on that spot, so agitated by conflicting thoughts and feelings that he could read neither heart nor mind clearly. Then, as he turned towards the city, all Paris spread itself out at his feet, a limpid, lightsome Paris, beneath the pink glow of that spring-like evening. The endless billows of house-roofs showed forth with wonderful distinctness, and one could have counted the chimney stacks and the little black streaks of the windows by the million. The edifices rising into the calm atmosphere seemed like the anchored vessels of some fleet arrested in its course, with lofty masting which glittered at the sun's farewell. And never before had Pierre so distinctly observed the divisions of that human ocean. Eastward and northward was the city of manual toil, with the rumbling and the smoke of its factories. Southward, beyond the river, was the city of study, of intellectual labour, so calm, so perfectly serene. And on all sides the passion of trade ascended from the central districts, where the crowds rolled and scrambled amidst an everlasting uproar of wheels; while westward, the city of the happy and powerful ones, those who fought for sovereignty and wealth, spread out its piles of palaces amidst the slowly reddening flare of the declining planet.

And then, from the depths of his negation, the chaos into which his loss of faith had plunged him, Pierre felt a delicious freshness pass like the vague

advent of a new faith. So vague it was that he could not have expressed even his hope of it in words. But already among the rough factory workers, manual toil had appeared to him necessary and redemptive, in spite of all the misery and abominable injustice to which it led. And now the young men of intellect of whom he had despaired, that generation of the morrow which he had thought spoilt, relapsing into ancient error and rottenness, had appeared to him full of virile promise, resolved to prosecute the work of those who had gone before, and effect, by the aid of Science only, the conquest of absolute truth and absolute justice.

## V

### PROBLEMS

A FULL month had already gone by since Guillaume had taken refuge at his brother's little house at Neuilly. His wrist was now nearly healed. He had long ceased to keep his bed, and often strolled through the garden. In spite of his impatience to go back to Montmartre, join his loved ones and resume his work there, he was each morning prompted to defer his return by the news he found in the newspapers. The situation was ever the same. Salvat, whom the police now suspected, had been perceived one evening near the central markets, and then again lost sight of. Every day, however, his arrest was said to be imminent. And in that case what would happen? Would he speak out, and would fresh perquisitions be made?

For a whole week the press had been busy with the bradawl found under the entrance of the Duvillard mansion. Nearly every reporter in Paris had called at the Grandidier factory and interviewed both workmen and master. Some had even started on personal investigations, in the hope of capturing the culprit themselves. There was no end of jesting about the incompetence of the police, and the hunt for Salvat was followed all the more passionately by the general public, as the papers overflowed with the most ridicu-

lous concoctions, predicting further explosions, and declaring even that all Paris would some morning be blown into the air. The "Voix du Peuple" set a fresh shudder circulating every day by its announcements of threatening letters, incendiary placards and mysterious, far-reaching plots. And never before had so base and foolish a spirit of contagion wafted insanity through a civilised city.

Guillaume, for his part, no sooner awoke of a morning than he was all impatience to see the newspapers, quivering at the idea that he would at last read of Salvat's arrest. In his state of nervous expectancy, the wild campaign which the press had started, the idiotic and the ferocious things which he found in one or another journal, almost drove him crazy. A number of "suspects" had already been arrested in a kind of chance razzia, which had swept up the usual Anarchist herd, together with sundry honest workmen and bandits, *illuminés* and lazy devils, in fact, a most singular, motley crew, which investigating magistrate Amadiou was endeavouring to turn into a gigantic association of evil-doers. One morning, moreover, Guillaume found his own name mentioned in connection with a perquisition at the residence of a revolutionary journalist, who was a friend of his. At this his heart bounded with revolt, but he was forced to the conclusion that it would be prudent for him to remain patient a little longer, in his peaceful retreat at Neuilly, since the police might at any moment break into his home at Montmartre, to arrest him should it find him there.

Amidst all this anxiety the brothers led a most soli-

tary and gentle life. Pierre himself now spent most of his time at home. The first days of March had come, and precocious springtide imparted delightful charm and warmth to the little garden. Guillaume, however, since quitting his bed, had more particularly installed himself in his father's old laboratory, now transformed into a spacious study. All the books and papers left by the illustrious chemist were still there, and among the latter Guillaume found a number of unfinished essays, the perusal of which greatly excited his interest, and often absorbed him from morning till night. It was this which largely enabled him to bear his voluntary seclusion patiently. Seated on the other side of the big table, Pierre also mostly occupied himself with reading; but at times his eyes would quit his book and wander away into gloomy reverie, into all the chaos into which he still and ever sank. For long hours the brothers would in this wise remain side by side, without speaking a word. Yet they knew they were together; and occasionally, when their eyes met, they would exchange a smile. The strong affection of former days was again springing up within them; their childhood, their home, their parents, all seemed to live once more in the quiet atmosphere they breathed. However, the bay window overlooked the garden in the direction of Paris, and often, when they emerged from their reading or their reverie, it was with a sudden feeling of anxiety, and in order to lend ear to the distant rumbling, the increased clamour of the great city.

On other occasions they paused as if in astonishment at hearing a continuous footfall overhead. It

was that of Nicholas Barthès, who still lingered in the room above. He seldom came downstairs, and scarcely ever ventured into the garden, for fear, said he, that he might be perceived and recognised from a distant house whose windows were concealed by a clump of trees. One might laugh at the old conspirator's haunting thought of the police. Nevertheless, the caged-lion restlessness, the ceaseless promenade of that perpetual prisoner who had spent two thirds of his life in the dungeons of France in his desire to secure the liberty of others, imparted to the silence of the little house a touching melancholy, the very rhythm as it were of all the great good things which one hoped for, but which would never perhaps come.

Very few visits drew the brothers from their solitude. Bertheroy came less frequently now that Guillaume's wrist was healing. The most assiduous caller was certainly Théophile Morin, whose discreet ring was heard every other day at the same hour. Though he did not share the ideas of Barthès he worshipped him as a martyr; and would always go upstairs to spend an hour with him. However, they must have exchanged few words, for not a sound came from the room. Whenever Morin sat down for a moment in the laboratory with the brothers, Pierre was struck by his seeming weariness, his ashen grey hair and beard and dismal countenance, all the life of which appeared to have been effaced by long years spent in the teaching profession. Indeed, it was only when the priest mentioned Italy that he saw his companion's resigned eyes blaze up like live coals. One day when he spoke of the great patriot Orlando Prada, Morin's compan-



ion of victory in Garibaldi's days, he was amazed by the sudden flare of enthusiasm which lighted up the other's lifeless features. However, these were but transient flashes: the old professor soon reappeared, and all that one found in Morin was the friend of Proudhon and the subsequent disciple of Auguste Comte. Of his Proudhonian principles he had retained all a pauper's hatred of wealth, and a desire for a more equitable partition of fortune. But the new times dismayed him, and neither principle nor temperament allowed him to follow Revolutionism to its utmost limits. Comte had imparted unshakable convictions to him in the sphere of intellectual questions, and he contented himself with the clear and decisive logic of Positivism, rejecting all metaphysical hypotheses as useless, persuaded as he was that the whole human question, whether social or religious, would be solved by science alone. This faith, firm as it had remained, was, however, coupled with secret bitterness, for nothing seemed to advance in a sensible manner towards its goal. Comte himself had ended in the most cloudy mysticism; great *savants* recoiled from truth in terror; and now barbarians were threatening the world with fresh night; all of which made Morin almost a reactionist in politics, already resigned to the advent of a dictator, who would set things somewhat in order, so that humanity might be able to complete its education.

Other visitors who occasionally called to see Guillaume were Bache and Janzen, who invariably came together and at night-time. Every now and then they would linger chatting with Guillaume in the spacious

study until two o'clock in the morning Bache, who was fat and had a fatherly air, with his little eyes gently beaming amidst all the snowy whiteness of his hair and beard, would talk on slowly, unctuously and interminably, as soon as he had begun to explain his views. He would address merely a polite bow to Saint-Simon, the initiator, the first to lay down the law that work was a necessity for one and all according to their capacities; but on coming to Fourier his voice softened and he confessed his whole religion. To his thinking, Fourier had been the real messiah of modern times, the saviour of genius, who had sown the good seed of the future world, by regulating society such as it would certainly be organised to-morrow. The law of harmony had been promulgated, human passions, liberated and utilised in healthy fashion, would become the requisite machinery; and work, rendered pleasant and attractive, would prove the very function of life. Nothing could discourage Bache; if merely one parish began by transforming itself into a *phalansterium*, the whole department would soon follow, then the adjacent departments, and finally all France. Moreover, Bache even favoured the schemes of Cabet, whose Icaria, said he, had in no wise been such a foolish idea. Further, he recalled a motion he had made, when member of the Commune in 1871, to apply Fourier's ideas to the French Republic, and he was apparently convinced that the troops of Versailles had delayed the triumph of Communism for half a century. Whenever people nowadays talked of table-turning he pretended to laugh, but at bottom he had remained an impenitent

“spiritist ” Since he had been a municipal councillor he had been travelling from one socialist sect to another, according as their ideas offered points of resemblance to his old faith. And he was fairly consumed by his need of faith, his perplexity as to the Divine, which he was now occasionally inclined to find in the legs of some piece of furniture, after denying its presence in the churches.

Janzen, for his part, was as taciturn as his friend Bache was garrulous. Such remarks as he made were brief, but they were as galling as lashes, as cutting as sabre-strokes. At the same time his ideas and theories remained somewhat obscure, partly by reason of this brevity of his, and partly on account of the difficulty he experienced in expressing himself in French. He was from over yonder, from some far-away land — Russia, Poland, Austria or Germany, nobody exactly knew; and it mattered little, for he certainly acknowledged no country, but wandered far and wide with his dream of blood-shedding fraternity. Whenever, with his wonted frigidity, he gave utterance to one of those terrible remarks of his which, like a scythe in a meadow, cut away all before him, little less than the necessity of thus mowing down nations, in order to sow the earth afresh with a young and better community, became apparent. At each proposition unfolded by Bache, such as labour rendered agreeable by police regulations, *phalansteria* organised like barracks, religion transformed into pantheist or spiritist deism, he gently shrugged his shoulders. What could be the use of such childishness, such hypocritical repairing, when the house was falling and

the only honest course was to throw it to the ground, and build up the substantial edifice of to-morrow with entirely new materials? On the subject of propaganda by deeds, bomb-throwing and so forth, he remained silent, though his gestures were expressive of infinite hope. He evidently approved that course. The legend which made him one of the perpetrators of the crime of Barcelona set a gleam of horrible glory in his mysterious past. One day when Bache, while speaking to him of his friend Bergaz, the shadowy Bourse jobber who had already been compromised in some piece of thieving, plainly declared that the aforesaid Bergaz was a bandit, Janzen contented himself with smiling, and replying quietly that theft was merely forced restitution. Briefly, in this man of culture and refinement, in whose own mysterious life one might perhaps have found various crimes but not a single act of base improbity, one could divine an implacable, obstinate theoretician, who was resolved to set the world ablaze for the triumph of his ideas.

On certain evenings when a visit from Théophile Morin coincided with one from Bache and Janzen, and they and Guillaume lingered chatting until far into the night, Pierre would listen to them in despair from the shadowy corner where he remained motionless, never once joining in the discussions. Distracted by his own unbelief and thirst for truth, he had at the outset taken a passionate interest in these debates, desirous as he was of drawing up a balance-sheet of the century's ideas, so as to form some notion of the distance that had been travelled, and the profits that had accrued. But he recoiled from all this in fresh

despair, on hearing the others argue, each from his own standpoint and without possibility of concession and agreement. After the repulses he had encountered at Lourdes and Rome, he well realised that in this fresh experiment which he was making with Paris, the whole brain of the century was in question, the new truths, the expected gospel which was to change the face of the world. And, burning with inconsiderate zeal, he went from one belief to another, which other he soon rejected in order to adopt a third. If he had first felt himself to be a Positivist with Morin, an Evolutionist and Determinist with Guillaume, he had afterwards been touched by the fraternal dream of a new golden age which he had found in Bache's humanitarian Communism. And indeed even Janzen had momentarily shaken him by his fierce confidence in the theory of liberative Individualism. But afterwards he had found himself out of his depth; and each and every theory had seemed to him but part of the chaotic contradictions and incoherences of humanity on its march. It was all a continuous piling up of dross, amidst which he lost himself. Although Fourier had sprung from Saint-Simon he denied him in part; and if Saint-Simon's doctrine ended in a kind of mystical sensuality, the other's conducted to an unacceptable regimenting of society. Proudhon, for his part, demolished without rebuilding anything. Comte, who created method and declared science to be the one and only sovereign, had not even suspected the advent of the social crisis which now threatened to sweep all away, and had finished personally as a mere worshipper of love, overpowered by woman.

Nevertheless, these two, Comte and Proudhon, entered the lists and fought against the others, Fourier and Saint-Simon, the combat between them or their disciples becoming so bitter and so blind that the truths common to them all were obscured and disfigured beyond recognition. Thence came the extraordinary muddle of the present hour, Bache with Saint-Simon and Fourier, and Morin with Proudhon and Comte, utterly failing to understand Mège, the Collectivist deputy, whom they held up to execration, him and his State Collectivism, in the same way, moreover, as they thundered against all the other present-time Socialist sects, without realising that these also, whatever their nature, had more or less sprung from the same masters as themselves. And all this seemingly indicated that Janzen was right when he declared that the house was past repair, fast crumbling amidst rottenness and insanity, and that it ought to be levelled to the ground.

One night, after the three visitors had gone, Pierre, who had remained with Guillaume, saw him grow very gloomy as he slowly walked to and fro. He, in his turn, had doubtless felt that all was crumbling. And though his brother alone was there to hear him, he went on speaking. He expressed all his horror of the Collectivist State as imagined by Mège, a Dictator-State re-establishing ancient servitude on yet closer lines. The error of all the Socialist sects was their arbitrary organisation of Labour, which enslaved the individual for the profit of the community. And, forced to conciliate the two great currents, the rights of society and the rights of the individual, Guillaume

had ended by placing his whole faith in free Communism, an anarchical state in which he dreamt of seeing the individual freed, moving and developing without restraint, for the benefit both of himself and of all others. Was not this, said he, the one truly scientific theory, unities creating worlds, atoms producing life by force of attraction, free and ardent love? All oppressive minorities would disappear; and the faculties and energies of one and all would by free play arrive at harmony amidst the equilibrium—which changed according to needs—of the active forces of advancing humanity. In this wise he pictured a nation, saved from State tutelage, without a master, almost without laws, a happy nation, each citizen of which, completely developed by the exercise of liberty, would, of his free will, come to an understanding with his neighbours with regard to the thousand necessities of life. And thence would spring society, free association, hundreds of associations which would regulate social life; though at the same time they would remain variable, in fact often opposed and hostile to one another. For progress is but the fruit of conflict and struggle; the world has only been created by the battle of opposing forces. And that was all; there would be no more oppressors, no more rich, no more poor; the domain of the earth with its natural treasures and its implements of labour would be restored to the people, its legitimate owners, who would know how to enjoy it with justice and logic, when nothing abnormal would impede their expansion. And then only would the law of love make its action felt; then would human solidarity, which,

among mankind, is the living form of universal attraction, acquire all its power, bringing men closer and closer together, and uniting them in one sole family. A splendid dream it was—the noble and pure dream of absolute freedom—free man in free society. And thither a *savant's* superior mind was fated to come after passing on the road the many Socialist sects which one and all bore the stigma of tyranny. And, assuredly, as thus indulged, the Anarchist idea is the loftiest, the proudest, of all ideas. And how delightful to yield to the hope of harmony in life—life which restored to the full exercise of its natural powers would of itself create happiness!

When Guillaume ceased speaking, he seemed to be emerging from a dream; and he glanced at Pierre with some dismay, for he feared that he might have said too much and have hurt his feelings. Pierre—moved though he was, for a moment in fact almost won over—had just seen the terrible practical objection, which destroyed all hope, arise before his mind's eye. Why had not harmony asserted itself in the first days of the world's existence, at the time when societies were formed? How was it that tyranny had triumphed, delivering nations over to oppressors? And supposing that the apparently insolvable problem of destroying everything, and beginning everything afresh, should ever be solved, who could promise that mankind, obedient to the same laws, would not again follow the same paths as formerly? After all, mankind, nowadays, is simply what life has made it; and nothing proves that life would again make it other than it is. To begin afresh, ah, yes! but to attain



another result! But could that other result really come from man? Was it not rather man himself who should be changed? To start afresh from where one was, to continue the evolution that had begun, undoubtedly meant slow travel and dismal waiting. But how great would be the danger and even the delay, if one went back without knowing by what road across the whole chaos of ruins one might regain all the lost time!

"Let us go to bed," at last said Guillaume, smiling. "It's silly of me to weary you with all these things which don't concern you."

Pierre, in his excitement, was about to reveal his own heart and mind, and the whole torturing battle within him. But a feeling of shame again restrained him. His brother only knew him as a believing priest, faithful to his faith. And so, without answering, he betook himself to his room.

On the following evening, about ten o'clock, while Guillaume and Pierre sat reading in the study, the old servant entered to announce M. Janzen and a friend. The friend was Salvat.

"He wished to see you," Janzen explained to Guillaume. "I met him, and when he heard of your injury and anxiety he implored me to bring him here. And I've done so, though it was perhaps hardly prudent of me."

Guillaume had risen, full of surprise and emotion at such a visit; Pierre, however, though equally upset by Salvat's appearance, did not stir from his chair, but kept his eyes upon the workman.

"Monsieur Froment," Salvat ended by saying,

standing there in a timid, embarrassed way, "I was very sorry indeed when I heard of the worry I'd put you in; for I shall never forget that you were very kind to me when everybody else turned me away."

As he spoke he balanced himself alternately on either leg, and transferred his old felt hat from hand to hand.

"And so I wanted to come and tell you myself that if I took a cartridge of your powder one evening when you had your back turned, it's the only thing that I feel any remorse about in the whole business, since it may compromise you. And I also want to take my oath before you that you've nothing to fear from me, that I'll let my head be cut off twenty times if need be, rather than utter your name. That's all that I had in my heart."

He relapsed into silence and embarrassment, but his soft, dreamy eyes, the eyes of a faithful dog, remained fixed upon Guillaume with an expression of respectful worship. And Pierre was still gazing at him athwart the hateful vision which his arrival had conjured up, that of the poor, dead, errand girl, the fair pretty child lying ripped open under the entrance of the Duvillard mansion! Was it possible that he was there, he, that madman, that murderer, and that his eyes were actually moist!

Guillaume, touched by Salvat's words, had drawn near and pressed his hand. "I am well aware, Salvat," said he, "that you are not wicked at heart. But what a foolish and abominable thing you did!"

Salvat showed no sign of anger, but gently smiled. "Oh! if it had to be done again, Monsieur Froment,

I'd do it. It's my idea, you know. And, apart from you, all is well, I am content."

He would not sit down, but for another moment continued talking with Guillaume, while Janzen, as if he washed his hands of the business, deeming this visit both useless and dangerous, sat down and turned over the leaves of a picture book. And Guillaume made Salvat tell him what he had done on the day of the crime, how like a stray dog he had wandered in distraction through Paris, carrying his bomb with him, originally in his tool-bag and then under his jacket; how he had gone a first time to the Duvillard mansion and found its carriage entrance closed; then how he had betaken himself first to the Chamber of Deputies which the ushers had prevented him from entering, and afterwards to the Circus, where the thought of making a great sacrifice of *bourgeois* had occurred to him too late. And finally, how he had at last come back to the Duvillard mansion, as if drawn thither by the very power of destiny. His tool-bag was lying in the depths of the Seine, he said; he had thrown it into the water with sudden hatred of work, since it had even failed to give him bread. And he next told the story of his flight; the explosion shaking the whole district behind him, while, with delight and astonishment, he found himself some distance off, in quiet streets where nothing was as yet known. And for a month past he had been living in chance fashion, how or where he could hardly tell, but he had often slept in the open, and gone for a day without food. One evening little Victor Mathis had given him five francs. And other comrades had helped him,

taken him in for a night and sent him off at the first sign of peril. A far-spreading, tacit complicity had hitherto saved him from the police. As for going abroad, well, he had, at one moment, thought of doing so; but a description of his person must have been circulated, the gendarmes must be waiting for him at the frontiers, and so would not flight, instead of retarding, rather hasten his arrest? Paris, however, was an ocean, it was there that he incurred the least risk of capture. Moreover, he no longer had sufficient energy to flee. A fatalist as he was after his own fashion, he could not find strength to quit the pavements of Paris, but there awaited arrest, like a social waif carried chancewise through the multitude as in a dream.

"And your daughter, little Céline?" Guillaume inquired. "Have you ventured to go back to see her?"

Salvat waved his hand in a vague way. "No, but what would you have? She's with Mamma Théodore. Women always find some help. And then I'm done for, I can do nothing for anybody. It's as if I were already dead." However, in spite of these words, tears were rising to his eyes. "Ah! the poor little thing!" he added, "I kissed her with all my heart before I went away. If she and the woman hadn't been starving so long the idea of that business would perhaps never have come to me."

Then, in all simplicity, he declared that he was ready to die. If he had ended by depositing his bomb at the entrance of Duvillard's house, it was because he knew the banker well, and was aware that he was the wealthiest of those *bourgeois* whose fathers at the

time of the Revolution had duped the people, by taking all power and wealth for themselves,—the power and wealth which the sons were nowadays so obstinately bent in retaining that they would not even bestow the veriest crumbs on others. As for the Revolution, he understood it in his own fashion, like an illiterate fellow who had learnt the little he knew from newspapers and speeches at public meetings. And he struck his chest with his fist as he spoke of his honesty, and was particularly desirous that none should doubt his courage because he had fled.

“I’ve never robbed anybody,” said he, “and if I don’t go and hand myself up to the police, it’s because they may surely take the trouble to find and arrest me. I’m very well aware that my affair’s clear enough as they’ve found that bradawl and know me. All the same, it would be silly of me to help them in their work. Still, they’d better make haste, for I’ve almost had enough of being tracked like a wild beast and no longer knowing how I live.”

Janzen, yielding to curiosity, had ceased turning over the leaves of the picture book and was looking at Salvat. There was a smile of disdain in the Anarchist leader’s cold eyes; and in his usual broken French he remarked: “A man fights and defends himself, kills others and tries to avoid being killed himself. That’s warfare.”

These words fell from his lips amidst deep silence. Salvat, however, did not seem to have heard them, but stammered forth his faith in a long sentence laden with fulsome expressions, such as the sacrifice of his life in order that want might cease, and the example

of a great action, in the certainty that it would inspire other heroes to continue the struggle. And with this certainly sincere faith and illuminism of his there was blended a martyr's pride, delight at being one of the radiant, worshipped saints of the dawning Revolutionary Church.

As he had come so he went off. When Janzen had led him away, it seemed as if the night which had brought him had carried him back into its impenetrable depths. And then only did Pierre rise from his chair. He was stifling, and threw the large window of the room wide open. It was a very mild but moonless night, whose silence was only disturbed by the subsiding clamour of Paris, which stretched away, invisible, on the horizon.

Guillaume, according to his habit, had begun to walk up and down. And at last he spoke, again forgetting that his brother was a priest. "Ah! the poor fellow! How well one can understand that deed of violence and hope! His whole past life of fruitless labour and ever-growing want explains it. Then, too, there has been all the contagion of ideas; the frequentation of public meetings where men intoxicate themselves with words, and of secret meetings among comrades where faith acquires firmness and the mind soars wildly. Ah! I think I know that man well indeed! He's a good workman, sober and courageous. Injustice has always exasperated him. And little by little the desire for universal happiness has cast him out of the realities of life which he has ended by holding in horror. So how can he do otherwise than live in a dream — a dream of redemption,

which, from circumstances, has turned to fire and murder as its fitting instruments. As I looked at him standing there, I fancied I could picture one of the first Christian slaves of ancient Rome. All the iniquity of olden pagan society, agonising beneath the rottenness born of debauchery and covetousness, was weighing on his shoulders, bearing him down. He had come from the dark Catacombs where he had whispered words of deliverance and redemption with his wretched brethren. And a thirst for martyrdom consumed him, he spat in the face of Cæsar, he insulted the gods, he fired the pagan temples, in order that the reign of Jesus might come and abolish servitude. And he was ready to die, to be torn to pieces by the wild beasts!"

Pierre did not immediately reply. He had already been struck, however, by the fact that there were undoubted points of resemblance between the secret propaganda and militant faith of the Anarchists, and certain practices of the first Christians. Both sects abandon themselves to a new faith in the hope that the humble may thereby at last reap justice. Paganism disappears through weariness of the flesh and the need of a more lofty and pure faith. That dream of a Christian paradise opening up a future life with a system of compensations for the ills endured on earth, was the outcome of young hope dawning at its historic hour. But to-day, when eighteen centuries have exhausted that hope, when the long experiment is over and the toiler finds himself duped and still and ever a slave, he once more dreams of getting happiness upon this earth, particularly as each day Science tends

more and more to show him that the happiness of the spheres beyond is a lie. And in all this there is but the eternal struggle of the poor and the rich, the eternal question of bringing more justice and less suffering to the world.

"But surely," Pierre at last replied, "you can't be on the side of those bandits, those murderers whose savage violence horrifies me. I let you talk on yesterday, when you dreamt of a great and happy people, of ideal anarchy in which each would be free amidst the freedom of all. But what abomination, what disgust both for mind and heart, when one passes from theory to propaganda and practice! If yours is the brain that thinks, whose is the hateful hand that acts, that kills children, throws down doors and empties drawers? Do you accept that responsibility? With your education, your culture, the whole social heredity behind you, does not your entire being revolt at the idea of stealing and murdering?"

Guillaume halted before his brother, quivering. "Steal and murder! no! no! I will not. But one must say everything and fully understand the history of the evil hour through which we are passing. It is madness sweeping by, and, to tell the truth, everything necessary to provoke it has been done. At the very dawn of the Anarchist theory, at the very first innocent actions of its partisans, there was such stern repression, the police so grossly ill-treating the poor devils that fell into its hands, that little by little came anger and rage leading to the most horrible reprisals. It is the Terror initiated by the *bourgeois* that has produced Anarchist savagery. And would you know



whence Salvat and his crime have come? Why, from all our centuries of impudence and iniquity, from all that the nations have suffered, from all the sores which are now devouring us, the impatience for enjoyment, the contempt of the strong for the weak, the whole monstrous spectacle which is presented by our rotting society!"

Guillaume was again slowly walking to and fro; and as if he were reflecting aloud he continued: "Ah! to reach the point I have attained, through how much thought, through how many battles, have I not passed! I was merely a Positivist, a *savant* devoted to observation and experiment, accepting nothing apart from proven facts. Scientifically and socially, I admitted that simple evolution had slowly brought humanity into being. But both in the history of the globe and that of human society, I found it necessary to make allowance for the volcano, the sudden cataclysm, the sudden eruption, by which each geological phase, each historical period, has been marked. In this wise one ends by ascertaining that no forward step has ever been taken, no progress ever accomplished in the world's history, without the help of horrible catastrophes. Each advance has meant the sacrifice of millions and millions of human lives. This of course revolts us, given our narrow ideas of justice, and we regard nature as a most barbarous mother; but, if we cannot excuse the volcano, we ought to deal with it when it bursts forth, like *savants* forewarned of its possibility. . . . And then, ah, then! well, perhaps I'm a dreamer like others, but I have my own notions."

With a sweeping gesture he confessed what a social dreamer there was within him beside the methodical and scrupulous *savant*. His constant endeavour was to bring all back to science, and he was deeply grieved at finding in nature no scientific sign of equality or even justice, such as he craved for in the social sphere. His despair indeed came from this inability to reconcile scientific logic with apostolic love, the dream of universal happiness and brotherhood and the end of all iniquity.

Pierre, however, who had remained near the open window, gazing into the night towards Paris, whence ascended the last sounds of the evening of passionate pleasure, felt the whole flood of his own doubt and despair stifling him. It was all too much: that brother of his who had fallen upon him with his scientific and apostolic beliefs, those men who came to discuss contemporary thought from every standpoint, and finally that Salvat who had brought thither the exasperation of his mad deed. And Pierre, who had hitherto listened to them all without a word, without a gesture, who had hidden his secrets from his brother, seeking refuge in his supposed priestly views, suddenly felt such bitterness stirring his heart that he could lie no longer.

"Ah! brother, if you have your dream, I have my sore which has eaten into me and left me void! Your Anarchy, your dream of just happiness, for which Salvat works with bombs, why, it is the final burst of insanity which will sweep everything away! How is it that you can't realise it? The century is ending in ruins. I've been listening to you all for a month

past. Fourier destroyed Saint-Simon, Proudhon and Comte demolished Fourier, each in turn piling up incoherences and contradictions, leaving mere chaos behind them, which nobody dares to sort out. And since then, Socialist sects have been swarming and multiplying, the more sensible of them leading simply to dictatorship, while the others indulge in most dangerous reveries. And after such a tempest of ideas there could indeed come nothing but your Anarchy, which undertakes to bring the old world to a finish by reducing it to dust. . . . Ah! I expected it, I was waiting for it — that final catastrophe, that fratricidal madness, the inevitable class warfare in which our civilisation was destined to collapse! Everything announced it: the want and misery below, the egotism up above, all the cracking of the old human habitation, borne down by too great a weight of crime and grief. When I went to Lourdes it was to see if the divinity of simple minds would work the awaited miracle, and restore the belief of the early ages to the people, which rebelled through excess of suffering. And when I went to Rome it was in the naive hope of there finding the new religion required by our democracies, the only one that could pacify the world by bringing back the fraternity of the golden age. But how foolish of me all that was! Both here and there, I simply lighted on nothingness. There where I so ardently dreamt of finding the salvation of others, I only sank myself, going down apeak like a ship not a timber of which is ever found again. One tie still linked me to my fellow-men, that of charity, the dressing, relieving, and perhaps, in the long run,

healing, of wounds and sores; but that last cable has now been severed. Charity, to my mind, appears futile and derisive by the side of justice, to whom all supremacy belongs, and whose advent has become a necessity and can be stayed by none. And so it is all over, I am mere ashes, an empty grave as it were. I no longer believe in anything, anything, anything whatever!"

Pierre had risen to his full height, with arms outstretched as if to let all the nothingness within his heart and mind fall from them. And Guillaume, distracted by the sight of such a fierce denier, such a despairing Nihilist as was now revealed to him, drew near, quivering: "What are you saying, brother! I thought you so firm, so calm in your belief! A priest to be admired, a saint worshipped by the whole of this parish! I was unwilling even to discuss your faith, and now it is you who deny all, and believe in nothing whatever!"

Pierre again slowly stretched out his arms. "There is nothing, I tried to learn all, and only found the atrocious grief born of the nothingness that overwhelms me."

"Ah! how you must suffer, Pierre, my little brother! Can religion, then, be even more withering than science, since it has ravaged you like that, while I have yet remained an old madman, still full of fancies?"

Guillaume caught hold of Pierre's hands and pressed them, full of terrified compassion in presence of all the grandeur and horror embodied in that unbelieving priest who watched over the belief of others, and chastely, honestly discharged his duty amidst the

haughty sadness born of his falsehood. And how heavily must that falsehood have weighed upon his conscience for him to confess himself in that fashion, amidst an utter collapse of his whole being! A month previously, in the unexpansiveness of his proud solitude, he would never have taken such a course. To speak out it was necessary that he should have been stirred by many things, his reconciliation with his brother, the conversations he had heard of an evening, the terrible drama in which he was mingled, as well as his reflections on labour struggling against want, and the vague hope with which the sight of intellectual youth had inspired him. And, indeed, amid the very excess of his negation was there not already the faint dawn of a new faith?

This Guillaume must have understood, on seeing how he quivered with unsatisfied tenderness as he emerged from the fierce silence which he had preserved so long. He made him sit down near the window, and placed himself beside him without releasing his hands. "But I won't have you suffer, my little brother!" he said; "I won't leave you, I'll nurse you. For I know you much better than you know yourself. You would never have suffered were it not for the battle between your heart and your mind, and you will cease to suffer on the day when they make peace, and you love what you understand." And in a lower voice, with infinite affection, he went on: "You see, it's our poor mother and our poor father continuing their painful struggle in you. You were too young at the time, you couldn't know what went on. But I knew them both very wretched: he, wretched through

her, who treated him as if he were one of the damned, and she, suffering through him, tortured by his irreligion. When he died, struck down by an explosion in this very room, she took it to be the punishment of God. Yet, what an honest man he was, with a good, great heart, what a worker, seeking for truth alone, and desirous of the love and happiness of all! Since we have spent our evenings here, I have felt him coming back, reviving as it were both around and within us; and she, too, poor, saintly woman, is ever here, enveloping us with love, weeping, and yet stubbornly refusing to understand. It is they, perhaps, who have kept me here so long, and who at this very moment are present to place your hands in mine."

And, indeed, it seemed to Pierre as if he could feel the breath of vigilant affection which Guillaume evoked passing over them both. There was again a revival of all the past, all their youth, and nothing could have been more delightful.

"You hear me, brother," Guillaume resumed. "You must reconcile them, for it is only in you that they can be reconciled. You have his firm, lofty brow, and her mouth and eyes of unrealisable tenderness. So, try to bring them to agreement, by some day contenting, as your reason shall allow, the everlasting thirst for love, and self-bestowal, and life, which for lack of satisfaction is killing you. Your frightful wretchedness has no other cause. Come back to life, love, bestow yourself, be a man!"

Pierre raised a dolorous cry: "No, no, the death born of doubt has swept through me, withering and

shattering everything, and nothing more can live in that cold dust!"

"But, come," resumed Guillaume, "you cannot have reached such absolute negation. No man reaches it. Even in the most disabused of minds there remains a nook of fancy and hope. To deny charity, devotion, the prodigies which love may work, ah! for my part I do not go so far as that. And now that you have shown me your sore, why should I not tell you my dream, the wild hope which keeps me alive! It is strange; but, are *savants* to be the last childish dreamers, and is faith only to spring up nowadays in chemical laboratories?"

Intense emotion was stirring Guillaume; there was battle waging in both his brain and his heart. And at last, yielding to the deep compassion which filled him, vanquished by his ardent affection for his unhappy brother, he spoke out. But he had drawn yet closer to Pierre, even passed one arm around him; and it was thus embracing him that he, in his turn, made his confession, lowering his voice as if he feared that someone might overhear his secret. "Why should you not know it?" he said. "My own sons are ignorant of it. But you are a man and my brother, and since there is nothing of the priest left in you, it is to the brother I will confide it. This will make me love you the more, and perhaps it may do you good."

Then he told him of his invention, a new explosive, a powder of such extraordinary force that its effects were incalculable. And he had found employment for this powder in an engine of warfare, a special

cannon, hurling bombs which would assure the most overwhelming victory to the army using them. The enemy's forces would be destroyed in a few hours, and besieged cities would fall into dust at the slightest bombardment. He had long searched and doubted, calculated, recalculated and experimented; but everything was now ready: the precise formula of the powder, the drawings for the cannon and the bombs, a whole packet of precious papers stored in a safe spot. And after months of anxious reflection he had resolved to give his invention to France, so as to ensure her a certainty of victory in her coming, inevitable war with Germany!

At the same time, he was not a man of narrow patriotism; on the contrary he had a very broad, international conception of the future liberative civilisation. Only he believed in the initiatory mission of France, and particularly in that of Paris, which, even as it is to-day, was destined to be the world's brain to-morrow, whence all science and justice would proceed. The great idea of liberty and equality had already soared from it at the prodigious blast of the Revolution; and from its genius and valour the final emancipation of man would also take its flight. Thus it was necessary that Paris should be victorious in the struggle in order that the world might be saved.

Pierre understood his brother, thanks to the lecture on explosives which he had heard at Bertheroy's. And the grandeur of this scheme, this dream, particularly struck him when he thought of the extraordinary future which would open for Paris amidst the effulgent blaze of the bombs. Moreover, he was struck by all



the nobility of soul which had lain behind his brother's anxiety for a month past. If Guillaume had trembled it was simply with fear that his invention might be divulged in consequence of Salvat's crime. The slightest indiscretion might compromise everything; and that little stolen cartridge, whose effects had so astonished *savants*, might reveal his secret. He felt it necessary to act in mystery, choosing his own time, awaiting the proper hour, until when the secret would slumber in its hiding-place, confided to the sole care of Mère-Grand, who had her orders and knew what she was to do should he, in any sudden accident, disappear.

"And, now," said Guillaume in conclusion, "you know my hopes and my anguish, and you can help me and even take my place if I am unable to reach the end of my task. Ah! to reach the end! Since I have been shut up here, reflecting, consumed by anxiety and impatience, there have been hours when I have ceased to see my way clearly! There is that Salvat, that wretched fellow for whose crime we are all of us responsible, and who is now being hunted down like a wild beast! There is also that insensate and insatiable *bourgeoisie*, which will let itself be crushed by the fall of the shaky old house, rather than allow the least repair to it! And there is further that avaricious, that abominable Parisian press, so harsh towards the weak and little, so fond of insulting those who have none to defend them, so eager to coin money out of public misfortune, and ready to spread insanity on all sides, simply to increase its sales! Where, therefore, shall one find truth and justice, the hand endowed

with logic and health that ought to be armed with the thunderbolt? Would Paris the conqueror, Paris the master of the nations, prove the justiciar, the saviour that men await! Ah! the anguish of believing oneself to be the master of the world's destinies, and to have to choose and decide."

He had risen again quivering, full of anger and fear that human wretchedness and baseness might prevent the realisation of his dream. And amidst the heavy silence which fell in the room, the little house suddenly resounded with a regular, continuous footfall.

"Ah, yes! to save men and love them, and wish them all to be equal and free," murmured Pierre, bitterly. "But just listen! Barthès's footsteps are answering you, as if from the everlasting dungeon into which his love of liberty has thrown him!"

However, Guillaume had already regained possession of himself, and coming back in a transport of his faith, he once more took Pierre in his loving, saving arms, like an elder brother who gives himself without restraint. "No, no, I'm wrong, I'm blaspheming," he exclaimed; "I wish you to be with me, full of hope and full of certainty. You must work, you must love, you must revive to life. Life alone can give you back peace and health."

Tears returned to the eyes of Pierre, who was penetrated to the heart by this ardent affection. "Ah! how I should like to believe you," he faltered, "and try to cure myself. True, I have already felt, as it were, a vague revival within me. And yet to live again, no, I cannot; the priest that I am is dead — a lifeless, an empty tomb."

He was shaken by so frightful a sob, that Guillaume could not restrain his own tears. And clasped in one another's arms the brothers wept on, their hearts full of the softest emotion in that home of their youth, whither the dear shadows of their parents ever returned, hovering around until they should be reconciled and restored to the peace of the earth. And all the darkness and mildness of the garden streamed in through the open window, while yonder, on the horizon, Paris had fallen asleep in the mysterious gloom, beneath a very peaceful sky which was studded with stars.

## BOOK III



### I

#### THE RIVALS

ON the Wednesday preceding the mid-Lent Thursday, a great charity bazaar was held at the Duvillard mansion, for the benefit of the Asylum of the Invalids of Labour. The ground-floor reception rooms, three spacious Louis Seize *salons*, whose windows overlooked the bare and solemn courtyard, were given up to the swarm of purchasers, five thousand admission cards having been distributed among all sections of Parisian society. And the opening of the bombarded mansion in this wise to thousands of visitors was regarded as quite an event, a real manifestation, although some people whispered that the Rue Godot-de-Mauroy and the adjacent streets were guarded by quite an army of police agents.

The idea of the bazaar had come from Duvillard himself, and at his bidding his wife had resigned herself to all this worry for the benefit of the enterprise over which she presided with such distinguished nonchalance. On the previous day the "Globe" newspaper, inspired by its director Fonsèque, who was also the general manager of the asylum, had published a very fine article, announcing the bazaar, and pointing out how noble, and touching, and generous was the

initiative of the Baroness, who still gave her time, her money, and even her home to charity, in spite of the abominable crime which had almost reduced that home to ashes. Was not this the magnanimous answer of the spheres above to the hateful passions of the spheres below? And was it not also a peremptory answer to those who accused the capitalists of doing nothing for the wage-earners, the disabled and broken-down sons of toil?

The drawing-room doors were to be opened at two o'clock, and would only close at seven, so that there would be five full hours for the sales. And at noon, when nothing was as yet ready downstairs, when workmen and women were still decorating the stalls, and sorting the goods amidst a final scramble, there was, as usual, a little friendly *déjeuner*, to which a few guests had been invited, in the private rooms on the first floor. However, a scarcely expected incident had given a finishing touch to the general excitement of the house: that very morning Sagnier had resumed his campaign of denunciation in the matter of the African Railway Lines. In a virulent article in the "*Voix du Peuple*," he had inquired if it were the intention of the authorities to beguile the public much longer with the story of that bomb and that Anarchist whom the police did not arrest. And this time, while undertaking to publish the names of the thirty-two corrupt senators and deputies in a very early issue, he had boldly named Minister Barroux as one who had pocketed a sum of 200,000 francs. Mège would therefore certainly revive his interpellation, which might become dangerous, now that Paris had been

thrown into such a distracted state by terror of the Anarchists. At the same time it was said that Vignon and his party had resolved to turn circumstances to account, with the object of overthrowing the ministry. Thus a redoubtable crisis was inevitably at hand. Fortunately, the Chamber did not meet that Wednesday; in fact, it had adjourned until the Friday, with the view of making mid-Lent a holiday. And so forty-eight hours were left one to prepare for the onslaught.

Eve, that morning, seemed more gentle and languid than ever, rather pale too, with an expression of sorrowful anxiety in the depths of her beautiful eyes. She set it all down to the very great fatigue which the preparations for the bazaar had entailed on her. But the truth was that Gérard de Quinsac, after shunning any further assignation, had for five days past avoided her in an embarrassed way. Still she was convinced that she would see him that morning, and so she had again ventured to wear the white silk gown which made her look so much younger than she really was. At the same time, beautiful as she had remained, with her delicate skin, superb figure and noble and charming countenance, her six-and-forty years were asserting themselves in her blotchy complexion and the little creases which were appearing about her lips, eyelids and temples.

Camille, for her part, though her position as daughter of the house made it certain that she would attract much custom as a saleswoman, had obstinately persisted in wearing one of her usual dresses, a dark "carmelite" gown, an old woman's frock, as she her-

self called it with a cutting laugh. However, her long and wicked-looking face beamed with some secret delight; such an expression of wit and intelligence wreathing her thin lips and shining in her big eyes that one lost sight of her deformity and thought her almost pretty.

Eve experienced a first deception in the little blue and silver sitting-room, where, accompanied by her daughter, she awaited the arrival of her guests. General de Bozonnet, whom Gérard was to have brought with him, came in alone, explaining that Madame de Quinsac had felt rather poorly that morning, and that Gérard, like a good and dutiful son, had wished to remain with her. Still he would come to the bazaar directly after *déjeuner*. While the Baroness listened to the General, striving to hide her disappointment and her fear that she would now be unable to obtain any explanation from Gérard that day, Camille looked at her with eager, devouring eyes. And a certain covert instinct of the misfortune threatening her must at that moment have come to Eve, for in her turn she glanced at her daughter and turned pale as if with anxiety.

Then Princess Rosemonde de Harn swept in like a whirlwind. She also was to be one of the saleswomen at the stall chosen by the Baroness, who liked her for her very turbulence, the sudden gaiety which she generally brought with her. Gowned in fire-hued satin (red shot with yellow), looking very eccentric with her curly hair and thin boyish figure, she laughed and talked of an accident by which her carriage had almost been cut in halves. Then, as Baron Duvillard

and Hyacinthe came in from their rooms, late as usual, she took possession of the young man and scolded him, for on the previous evening she had vainly waited for him till ten o'clock in the expectation that he would keep his promise to escort her to a tavern at Montmartre, where some horrible things were said to occur. Hyacinthe, looking very bored, quietly replied that he had been detained at a *séance* given by some adepts in the New Magic, in the course of which the soul of St. Theresa had descended from heaven to recite a love sonnet.

However, Fonsègue was now coming in with his wife, a tall, thin, silent and generally insignificant woman, whom he seldom took about with him. On this occasion he had been obliged to bring her, as she was one of the lady-patronesses of the asylum, and he himself was coming to lunch with the Duvillards in his capacity as general manager. To the superficial observer he looked quite as gay as usual; but he blinked nervously, and his first glance was a questioning one in the direction of Duvillard, as if he wished to know how the latter bore the fresh thrust directed at him by Sagnier. And when he saw the banker looking perfectly composed, as superb, as rubicund as usual, and chatting in a bantering way with Rosemonde, he also put on an easy air, like a gamester who had never lost but had always known how to compel good luck, even in hours of treachery. And by way of showing his unconstraint of mind he at once addressed the Baroness on managerial matters: "Have you now succeeded in seeing M. l'Abbé Froment for the affair of that old man Laveuve, whom



he so warmly recommended to us? All the formalities have been gone through, you know, and he can be brought to us at once, as we have had a bed vacant for three days past."

"Yes, I know," replied Eve; "but I can't imagine what has become of Abbé Froment, for he hasn't given us a sign of life for a month past. However, I made up my mind to write to him yesterday, and beg him to come to the bazaar to-day. In this manner I shall be able to acquaint him with the good news myself."

"It was to leave you the pleasure of doing so," said Fonsègue, "that I refrained from sending him any official communication. He's a charming priest, is he not?"

"Oh! charming, we are very fond of him."

However, Duvillard now intervened to say that they need not wait for Duthil, as he had received a telegram from him stating that he was detained by sudden business. At this Fonsègue's anxiety returned, and he once more questioned the Baron with his eyes. Duvillard smiled, however, and reassured him in an undertone: "It's nothing serious. Merely a commission for me, about which he'll only be able to bring me an answer by-and-by." Then, taking Fonsègue on one side, he added: "By the way, don't forget to insert the paragraph I told you of."

"What paragraph? Oh! yes, the one about that *soirée* at which Silviane recited a piece of verse. Well, I wanted to speak to you about it. It worries me a little, on account of the excessive praise it contains."

Duvillard, but a moment before so full of serenity,

with his lofty, conquering, disdainful mien, now suddenly became pale and agitated. "But I absolutely want it to be inserted, my dear fellow! You would place me in the greatest embarrassment if it were not to appear, for I promised Silviane that it should."

As he spoke his lips trembled, and a scared look came into his eyes, plainly revealing his dismay.

"All right, all right," said Fonsèque, secretly amused, and well pleased at this complicity. "As it's so serious the paragraph shall go in, I promise you."

The whole company was now present, since neither Gérard nor Duthil was to be expected. So they went into the dining-room amidst a final noise of hammering in the sale-rooms below. The meal proved somewhat of a scramble, and was on three occasions disturbed by female attendants, who came to explain difficulties and ask for orders. Doors were constantly slamming, and the very walls seemed to shake with the unusual bustle which filled the house. And feverish as they all were in the dining-room, they talked in desultory, haphazard fashion on all sorts of subjects, passing from a ball given at the Ministry of the Interior on the previous night, to the popular mid-Lent festival which would take place on the morrow, and ever reverting to the bazaar, the prices that had been given for the goods which would be on sale, the prices at which they might be sold, and the probable figure of the full receipts, all this being interspersed with strange anecdotes, witticisms and bursts of laughter. On the General mentioning magistrate Amadieu, Eve declared that she no longer dared to invite him

to *déjeuner*, knowing how busy he was at the Palace of Justice. Still, she certainly hoped that he would come to the bazaar and contribute something. Then Fonségue amused himself with teasing Princess Rosemonde about her fire-hued gown, in which, said he, she must already feel roasted by the flames of hell, a suggestion which secretly delighted her, as Satanism had now become her momentary passion. Meantime, Duvillard lavished the most gallant politeness on that silent creature, Madame Fonségue, while Hyacinthe, in order to astonish even the Princess, explained in a few words how the New Magic could transform a chaste young man into a real angel. And Camille, who seemed very happy and very excited, from time to time darted a hot glance at her mother, whose anxiety and sadness increased as she found the other more and more aggressive, and apparently resolved upon open and merciless warfare.

At last, just as the dessert was coming to an end, the Baroness heard her daughter exclaim in a piercing, defiant voice: "Oh! don't talk to me of the old ladies who still seem to be playing with dolls, and paint themselves, and dress as if they were about to be confirmed! All such ogresses ought to retire from the scene! I hold them in horror!"

At this, Eve nervously rose from her seat, and exclaimed apologetically: "You must forgive me for hurrying you like this. But I'm afraid that we shan't have time to drink our coffee in peace."

The coffee was served in the little blue and silver sitting-room, where bloomed some lovely yellow roses, testifying to the Baroness's keen passion for flowers,

which made the house an abode of perpetual spring. Duvillard and Fonsègue, however, carrying their cups of steaming coffee with them, at once went into the former's private room to smoke a cigar there and chat in freedom. As the door remained wide open, one could hear their gruff voices more or less distinctly. Meantime, General de Bozonnet, delighted to find in Madame Fonsègue a serious, submissive person, who listened without interrupting, began to tell her a very long story of an officer's wife who had followed her husband through every battle of the war of 1870. Then Hyacinthe, who took no coffee — contemptuously declaring it to be a beverage only fit for door-keepers — managed to rid himself of Rosemonde, who was sipping some kummel, in order to come and whisper to his sister: "I say, it was very stupid of you to taunt mamma in the way you did just now. I don't care a rap about it myself. But it ends by being noticed, and, I warn you candidly, it shows ill breeding."

Camille gazed at him fixedly with her black eyes. "Pray don't *you* meddle with my affairs," said she.

At this he felt frightened, scented a storm, and decided to take Rosemonde into the adjoining red drawing-room in order to show her a picture which his father had just purchased. And the General, on being called by him, likewise conducted Madame Fonsègue thither.

The mother and daughter then suddenly found themselves alone and face to face. Eve was leaning on a pier-table, as if overcome; and indeed, the least sorrow bore her down, so weak at heart she was, ever ready to weep in her naïve and perfect egotism. Why was

it that her daughter thus hated her, and did her utmost to disturb that last happy spell of love in which her heart lingered? She looked at Camille, grieved rather than irritated; and the unfortunate idea came to her of making a remark about her dress at the very moment when the girl was on the point of following the others into the larger drawing-room.

"It's quite wrong of you, my dear," said she, "to persist in dressing like an old woman. It doesn't improve you a bit."

As Eve spoke, her soft eyes, those of a courted and worshipped handsome woman, clearly expressed the compassion she felt for that ugly, deformed girl, whom she had never been able to regard as a daughter. Was it possible that she, with her sovereign beauty, that beauty which she herself had ever adored and nursed, making it her one care, her one religion — was it possible that she had given birth to such a graceless creature, with a dark, goatish profile, one shoulder higher than the other, and a pair of endless arms such as hunchbacks often have? All her grief and all her shame at having had such a child became apparent in the quivering of her voice.

Camille, however, had stopped short, as if struck in the face with a whip. Then she came back to her mother and the horrible explanation began with these simple words spoken in an undertone. "You consider that I dress badly? Well, you ought to have paid some attention to me, have seen that my gowns suited your taste, and have taught me your secret of looking beautiful!"

Eve, with her dislike of all painful feeling, all

quarrelling and bitter words, was already regretting her attack. So she sought to make a retreat, particularly as time was flying and they would soon be expected downstairs: "Come, be quiet, and don't show your bad temper when all those people can hear us. I have loved you ——"

But with a quiet yet terrible laugh Camille interrupted her. "You've loved me! Oh! my poor mamma, what a comical thing to say! Have you ever loved *anybody*? You want others to love *you*, but that's another matter. As for your child, any child, do you even know how it ought to be loved? You have always neglected me, thrust me on one side, deeming me so ugly, so unworthy of you! And besides, you have not had days and nights enough to love yourself! Oh! don't deny it, my poor mamma, but even now you're looking at me as if I were some loathsome monster that's in your way."

From that moment the abominable scene was bound to continue to the end. With their teeth set, their faces close together, the two women went on speaking in feverish whispers.

"Be quiet, Camille, I tell you! I will not allow such language!"

"But I won't be quiet when you do all you can to wound me. If it's wrong of me to dress like an old woman, perhaps another is rather ridiculous in dressing like a girl, like a bride."

"Like a bride? I don't understand you."

"Oh! yes, you do. However, I would have you know that everybody doesn't find me so ugly as you try to make them believe."

"If you look amiss, it is because you don't dress properly; that is all I said."

"I dress as I please, and no doubt I do so well enough, since I'm loved as I am."

"What, really! Does someone love you? Well, let him inform us of it and marry you."

"Yes — certainly, certainly! It will be a good rid-dance, won't it? And you'll have the pleasure of seeing me as a bride!"

Their voices were rising in spite of their efforts to restrain them. However, Camille paused and drew breath before hissing out the words: "Gérard is coming here to ask for my hand in a day or two."

Eve, livid, with wildly staring eyes, did not seem to understand. "Gérard? why do you tell me that?"

"Why, because it's Gérard who loves me and who is going to marry me! You drive me to extremities; you're for ever repeating that I'm ugly; you treat me like a monster whom nobody will ever care for. So I'm forced to defend myself and tell you the truth in order to prove to you that everybody is not of your opinion."

Silence fell; the frightful thing which had risen between them seemed to have arrested the quarrel. But there was neither mother nor daughter left there. They were simply two suffering, defiant rivals. Eve in her turn drew a long breath and glanced anxiously towards the adjoining room to ascertain if anyone were coming in or listening to them. And then in a tone of resolution she made answer:

"You cannot marry Gérard."

"Pray, why not?"

"Because I won't have it, because it's impossible."

"That isn't a reason; give me a reason."

"The reason is that the marriage is impossible — that is all."

"No, no, I'll tell you the reason since you force me to it. The reason is that Gérard is your lover! But what does that matter, since I know it and am willing to take him all the same?"

And to this retort Camille's flaming eyes added the words: "And it is particularly on that account that I want him." All the long torture born of her infirmities, all her rage at having always seen her mother beautiful, courted and adored, was now stirring her and seeking vengeance in cruel triumph. At last then she was snatching from her rival the lover of whom she had so long been jealous!

"You wretched girl!" stammered Eve, wounded in the heart and almost sinking to the floor. "You don't know what you say or what you make me suffer."

However, she again had to pause, draw herself erect and smile; for Rosemonde hastened in from the adjoining room with the news that she was wanted downstairs. The doors were about to be opened, and it was necessary she should be at her stall. Yes, Eve answered, she would be down in another moment. Still, even as she spoke she leant more heavily on the pier-table behind her in order that she might not fall.

Hyacinthe had drawn near to his sister: "You know," said he, "it's simply idiotic to quarrel like that. You would do much better to come downstairs."

But Camille harshly dismissed him. "Just *you* go



off, and take the others with you. It's quite as well that they shouldn't be about our ears "

Hyacinthe glanced at his mother, like one who knew the truth and considered the whole affair ridiculous. And then, vexed at seeing her so deficient in energy in dealing with that little pest, his sister, he shrugged his shoulders, and leaving them to their folly, conducted the others away. One could hear Rosemonde laughing as she went off below, while the General began to tell Madame Fonsègue another story as they descended the stairs together. However, at the moment when the mother and daughter at last fancied themselves alone once more, other voices reached their ears, those of Duvillard and Fonsègue, who were still near at hand. The Baron from his room might well overhear the dispute.

Eve felt that she ought to have gone off. But she had lacked the strength to do so, it had been a sheer impossibility for her after those words which had smote her like a buffet amidst her distress at the thought of losing her lover.

"Gérard cannot marry you," she said; "he does not love you "

"He does."

"You fancy it because he has good-naturedly shown some kindness to you, on seeing others pay you such little attention. But he does not love you."

"He does. He loves me first because I'm not such a fool as many others are, and particularly because I'm young."

This was a fresh wound for the Baroness; one inflicted with mocking cruelty in which rang out all the

daughter's triumphant delight at seeing her mother's beauty at last ripening and waning. "Ah! my poor mamma, you no longer know what it is to be young. If I'm not beautiful, at all events I'm young, my eyes are clear and my lips are fresh. And my hair's so long too, and I've so much of it that it would suffice to gown me if I chose. You see, one's never ugly when one's young. Whereas, my poor mamma, everything is ended when one gets old. It's all very well for a woman to have been beautiful, and to strive to keep so, but in reality there's only ruin left, and shame and disgust."

She spoke these words in such a sharp, ferocious voice that each of them entered her mother's heart like a knife. Tears rose to the eyes of the wretched woman, again stricken in her bleeding wound. Ah! it was true, she remained without weapons against youth. And all her anguish came from the consciousness that she was growing old, from the feeling that love was departing from her now, that like a fruit she had ripened and fallen from the tree.

"But Gérard's mother will never let him marry you," she said.

"He will prevail on her; that's his concern. I've a dowry of two millions, and two millions can settle many things."

"Do you now want to libel him, and say that he's marrying you for your money?"

"No, indeed! Gérard's a very nice and honest fellow. He loves me and he's marrying me for myself. But, after all, he isn't rich; he still has no assured position, although he's thirty-six; and there may well

be some advantage in a wife who brings you wealth as well as happiness. For, you hear, mamma, it's happiness I'm bringing him, real happiness, love that's shared and is certain of the future."

Once again their faces drew close together. The hateful scene, interrupted by sounds around them, postponed, and then resumed, was dragging on, becoming a perfect drama full of murderous violence, although they never shouted, but still spoke on in low and gasping voices. Neither gave way to the other, though at every moment they were liable to some surprise, for not only were all the doors open, so that the servants might come in, but the Baron's voice still rang out gaily, close at hand.

"He loves you, he loves you"—continued Eve. "That's what you say. But *he* never told you so."

"He has told me so twenty times, he repeats it every time that we are alone together!"

"Yes, just as one says it to a little girl by way of amusing her. But he has never told you that *he* meant to marry you."

"He told it me the last time he came. And it's settled. I'm simply waiting for him to get his mother's consent and make his formal offer."

"You lie, you lie, you wretched girl! You simply want to make me suffer, and you lie, you lie!"

Eve's grief at last burst forth in that cry of protest. She no longer knew that she was a mother, and was speaking to her daughter. The woman, the *amorosa*, alone remained in her, outraged and exasperated by a rival. And with a sob she confessed the truth: "It is I he loves! Only the last time I spoke to him, he

swore to me—you hear me?—he swore upon his honour that he did not love you, and that he would never marry you!”

A faint, sharp laugh came from Camille. Then, with an air of derisive compassion, she replied: “Ah! my poor mamma, you really make me sorry for you! What a child you are! Yes, really, you are the child, not I. What! you who ought to have so much experience, you still allow yourself to be duped by a man’s protests! That one really has no malice; and, indeed, that’s why he swears whatever you want him to swear, just to please and quiet you, for at heart he’s a bit of a coward.”

“You lie, you lie!”

“But just think matters over. If he no longer comes here, if he didn’t come to *déjeuner* this morning, it is simply because he’s had enough of you. He has left you for good; just have the courage to realise it. Of course he’s still polite and amiable, because he’s a well-bred man, and doesn’t know how to break off. The fact is that he takes pity on you.”

“You lie, you lie!”

“Well, question him then. Have a frank explanation with him. Ask him his intentions in a friendly way. And then show some good nature yourself, and realise that if you care for him you ought to give him me at once in his own interest. Give him back his liberty, and you will soon see that I’m the one he loves.”

“You lie, you lie! You wretched child, you only want to torture and kill me!”

Then, in her fury and distress, Eve remembered

that she was the mother, and that it was for her to chastise that unworthy daughter. There was no stick near her, but from a basket of the yellow roses, whose powerful scent intoxicated both of them, she plucked a handful of blooms, with long and spiny stalks, and smote Camille across the face. A drop of blood appeared on the girl's left temple, near her eyelid.

But she sprang forward, flushed and maddened by this correction, with her hand raised and ready to strike back. "Take care, mother! I swear I'd beat you like a gipsy! And now just put this into your head: I mean to marry Gérard, and I will; and I'll take him from you, even if I have to raise a scandal, should you refuse to give him to me with good grace."

Eve, after her one act of angry vigour, had sunk into an armchair, overcome, distracted. And all the horror of quarrels, which sprang from her egotistical desire to be happy, caressed, flattered and adored, was returning to her. But Camille, still threatening, still unsatiated, showed her heart as it really was, her stern, black, unforgiving heart, intoxicated with cruelty. There came a moment of supreme silence, while Duvillard's gay voice again rang out in the adjoining room.

The mother was gently weeping, when Hyacinthe, coming upstairs at a run, swept into the little *salon*. He looked at the two women, and made a gesture of indulgent contempt. "Ah! you're no doubt satisfied now! But what did I tell you? It would have been much better for you to have come downstairs at once! Everybody is asking for you. It's all idiotic. I've come to fetch you."

Eve and Camille would not yet have followed him, perhaps, if Duvillard and Fonsègue had not at that moment come out of the former's room. Having finished their cigars they also spoke of going downstairs. And Eve had to rise and smile and show dry eyes, while Camille, standing before a looking-glass, arranged her hair, and stanchd the little drop of blood that had gathered on her temple.

There was already quite a number of people below, in the three huge saloons adorned with tapestry and plants. The stalls had been draped with red silk, which set a gay, bright glow around the goods. And no ordinary bazaar could have put forth such a show, for there was something of everything among the articles of a thousand different kinds, from sketches by recognised masters, and the autographs of famous writers, down to socks and slippers and combs. The haphazard way in which things were laid out was in itself an attraction; and, in addition, there was a buffet, where the whitest of beautiful hands poured out champagne, and two lotteries, one for an organ and another for a pony-drawn village cart, the tickets for which were sold by a bevy of charming girls, who had scattered through the throng. As Duvillard had expected, however, the great success of the bazaar lay in the delightful little shiver which the beautiful ladies experienced as they passed through the entrance where the bomb had exploded. The rougher repairing work was finished, the walls and ceilings had been doctored, in part re-constructed. However, the painters had not yet come, and here and there the whiter stone and plaster work showed like fresh scars left by all

the terrible gashes. It was with mingled anxiety and rapture that pretty heads emerged from the carriages which, arriving in a continuous stream, made the flagstones of the court re-echo. And in the three saloons, beside the stalls, there was no end to the lively chatter: "Ah! my dear, did you see all those marks? How frightful, how frightful! The whole house was almost blown up. And to think it might begin again while we are here! One really needs some courage to come, but then, that asylum is such a deserving institution, and money is badly wanted to build a new wing. And besides, those monsters will see that we are not frightened, whatever they do."

When the Baroness at last came down to her stall with Camille she found the saleswomen feverishly at work already under the direction of Princess Rosemonde, who on occasions of this kind evinced the greatest cunning and rapacity, robbing the customers in the most impudent fashion. "Ah! here you are," she exclaimed. "Beware of a number of higglers who have come to secure bargains. I know them! They watch for their opportunities, turn everything topsy-turvy and wait for us to lose our heads and forget prices, so as to pay even less than they would in a real shop. But I'll get good prices from them, you shall see!"

At this, Eve, who for her own part was a most incapable saleswoman, had to laugh with the others. And in a gentle voice she made a pretence of addressing certain recommendations to Camille, who listened with a smiling and most submissive air. In point of fact the wretched mother was sinking with emotion,

particularly at the thought that she would have to remain there till seven o'clock, and suffer in secret before all those people, without possibility of relief. And thus it was almost like a respite when she suddenly perceived Abbé Froment sitting and waiting for her on a settee, covered with red velvet, near her stall. Her legs were failing her, so she took a place beside him.

"You received my letter then, Monsieur l'Abbé. I am glad that you have come, for I have some good news to give you, and wished to leave you the pleasure of imparting it to your *protégé*, that man Laveuve, whom you so warmly recommended to me. Every formality has now been fulfilled, and you can bring him to the asylum to-morrow."

Pierre gazed at her in stupefaction. "Laveuve? Why, he is dead!"

In her turn she became astonished. "What, dead! But you never informed me of it! If I told you of all the trouble that has been taken, of all that had to be undone and done again, and the discussions and the papers and the writing! Are you quite sure that he is dead?"

"Oh! yes, he is dead. He has been dead a month."

"Dead a month! Well, we could not know; you yourself gave us no sign of life. Ah! *mon Dieu!* what a worry that he should be dead. We shall now be obliged to undo everything again!"

"He is dead, madame. It is true that I ought to have informed you of it. But that doesn't alter the fact—he is dead."

Dead! that word which kept on returning, the



thought too, that for a month past she had been busy-ing herself for a corpse, quite froze her, brought her to the very depths of despair, like an omen of the cold death into which she herself must soon descend, in the shroud of her last passion. And, meantime, Pierre, despite himself, smiled bitterly at the atrocious irony of it all. Ah! that lame and halting Charity, which proffers help when men are dead!

The priest still lingered on the settee when the Baroness rose. She had seen magistrate Amadiieu hurriedly enter like one who just wished to show himself, purchase some trifle, and then return to the Palace of Justice. However, he was also perceived by little Mas-sot, the "Globe" reporter, who was prowling round the stalls, and who at once bore down upon him, eager for information. And he hemmed him in and forthwith interviewed him respecting the affair of that mechanician Salvat, who was accused of having deposited the bomb at the entrance of the house. Was this simply an invention of the police, as some newspapers pretended? Or was it really correct? And if so, would Salvat soon be arrested? In self-defence Amadiieu answered correctly enough that the affair did not as yet concern him, and would only come within his attributions, if Salvat should be arrested and the investigation placed in his hands. At the same time, however, the magistrate's pompous and affectedly shrewd manner suggested that he already knew everything to the smallest details, and that, had he chosen, he could have promised some great events for the morrow. A circle of ladies had gathered round him as he spoke, quite a number of pretty women feverish

with curiosity, who jostled one another in their eagerness to hear that brigand tale which sent a little shiver coursing under their skins. However, Amadiou managed to slip off after paying Rosemonde twenty francs for a cigarette case, which was perhaps worth thirty sous.

Massot, on recognising Pierre, came up to shake hands with him. "Don't you agree with me, Monsieur l'Abbé, that Salvat must be a long way off by now if he's got good legs? Ah! the police will always make me laugh!"

However, Rosemonde brought Hyacinthe up to the journalist. "Monsieur Massot," said she, "you who go everywhere, I want you to be judge. That Chamber of Horrors at Montmartre, that tavern where Legras sings the 'Flowers of the Streets' —"

"Oh! a delightful spot, madame," interrupted Massot, "I wouldn't take even a gendarme there."

"No, don't jest, Monsieur Massot, I'm talking seriously. Isn't it quite allowable for a respectable woman to go there when she's accompanied by a gentleman?" And, without allowing the journalist time to answer her, she turned towards Hyacinthe: "There! you see that Monsieur Massot doesn't say no! You've got to take me there this evening, it's sworn, it's sworn."

Then she darted away to sell a packet of pins to an old lady, while the young man contented himself with remarking, in the voice of one who has no illusions left: "She's quite idiotic with her Chamber of Horrors!"

Massot philosophically shrugged his shoulders. It was only natural that a woman should want to amuse herself. And when Hyacinthe had gone off, passing

with perverse contempt beside the lovely girls who were selling lottery tickets, the journalist ventured to murmur: "All the same, it would do that youngster good if a woman were to take him in hand."

Then, again addressing Pierre, he resumed. "Why, here comes Duthil! What did Sagnier mean this morning by saying that Duthil would sleep at Mazas to-night?"

In a great hurry apparently, and all smiles, Duthil was cutting his way through the crowd in order to join Duvillard and Fonsègue, who still stood talking near the Baroness's stall. And he waved his hand to them in a victorious way, to imply that he had succeeded in the delicate mission entrusted to him. This was nothing less than a bold manœuvre to hasten Silviane's admission to the *Comédie Française*. The idea had occurred to her of making the Baron give a dinner at the *Café Anglais* in order that she might meet at it an influential critic, who, according to her statements, would compel the authorities to throw the doors wide open for her as soon as he should know her. However, it did not seem easy to secure the critic's presence, as he was noted for his sternness and grumbling disposition. And, indeed, after a first repulse, Duthil had for three days past been obliged to exert all his powers of diplomacy, and bring even the remotest influence into play. But he was radiant now, for he had conquered.

"It's for this evening, my dear Baron, at half-past seven," he exclaimed. "Ah! dash it all, I've had more trouble than I should have had to secure a concession vote!" Then he laughed with the pretty

impudence of a man of pleasure, whom political conscientiousness did not trouble. And, indeed, his allusion to the fresh denunciations of the "Voix du Peuple" hugely amused him.

"Don't jest," muttered Fonsègue, who for his part wished to amuse himself by frightening the young deputy. "Things are going very badly!"

Duthil turned pale, and a vision of the police and Mazas rose before his eyes. In this wise sheer funk came over him from time to time. However, with his lack of all moral sense, he soon felt reassured and began to laugh. "Bah!" he retorted gaily, winking towards Duvillard, "the governor's there to pilot the barque!"

The Baron, who was extremely pleased, had pressed his hands, thanked him, and called him an obliging fellow. And now turning towards Fonsègue, he exclaimed: "I say, you must make one of us this evening. Oh! it's necessary. I want something imposing round Silviane. Duthil will represent the Chamber, you journalism, and I finance ——" But he suddenly paused on seeing Gérard, who, with a somewhat grave expression, was leisurely picking his way through the sea of skirts. "Gérard, my friend," said the Baron, after beckoning to him, "I want you to do me a service." And forthwith he told him what was in question; how the influential critic had been prevailed upon to attend a dinner which would decide Silviane's future; and how it was the duty of all her friends to rally round her.

"But I can't," the young man answered in embarrassment. "I have to dine at home with my mother, who was rather poorly this morning."

"Oh! a sensible woman like your mother will readily understand that there are matters of exceptional importance. Go home and excuse yourself. Tell her some story, tell her that a friend's happiness is in question." And as Gérard began to weaken, Duvillard added: "The fact is, that I really want you, my dear fellow; I must have a society man. Society, you know, is a great force in theatrical matters; and if Sylviane has society with her, her triumph is certain."

Gérard promised, and then chatted for a moment with his uncle, General de Bozonnet, who was quite enlivened by that throng of women, among whom he had been carried hither and thither like an old rudderless ship. After acknowledging the amiability with which Madame Fonsègue had listened to his stories, by purchasing an autograph of Monseigneur Martha from her for a hundred francs, he had quite lost himself amid the bevy of girls who had passed him on, one to another. And now, on his return from them, he had his hands full of lottery tickets: "Ah! my fine fellow," said he, "I don't advise you to venture among all those young persons. You would have to part with your last copper. But, just look! there's Mademoiselle Camille beckoning to you!"

Camille, indeed, from the moment she had perceived Gérard, had been smiling at him and awaiting his approach. And when their glances met he was obliged to go to her, although, at the same moment, he felt that Eve's despairing and entreating eyes were fixed upon him. The girl, who fully realised that her mother was watching her, at once made a marked display of amiability, profiting by the license which charitable

fervour authorised, to slip a variety of little articles into the young man's pockets, and then place others in his hands, which she pressed within her own, showing the while all the sparkle of youth, indulging in fresh, merry laughter, which fairly tortured her rival.

So extreme was Eve's suffering, that she wished to intervene and part them. But it so chanced that Pierre barred her way, for he wished to submit an idea to her before leaving the bazaar. "Madame," said he, "since that man Laveuve is dead, and you have taken so much trouble with regard to the bed which you now have vacant, will you be so good as to keep it vacant until I have seen our venerable friend, Abbé Rose? I am to see him this evening, and he knows so many cases of want, and would be so glad to relieve one of them, and bring you some poor *protégé* of his."

"Yes, certainly," stammered the Baroness, "I shall be very happy, — I will wait a little, as you desire, — of course, of course, Monsieur l'Abbé."

She was trembling all over; she no longer knew what she was saying; and, unable to conquer her passion, she turned aside from the priest, unaware even that he was still there, when Gérard, yielding to the dolorous entreaty of her eyes, at last managed to escape from Camille and join her.

"What a stranger you are becoming, my friend!" she said aloud, with a forced smile. "One never sees you now."

"Why, I have been poorly," he replied, in his amiable way. "Yes, I assure you I have been ailing a little."

He, ailing! She looked at him with maternal anxiety, quite upset. And, indeed, however proud and lofty his figure, his handsome regular face did seem to her paler than usual. It was as if the nobility of the façade had, in some degree, ceased to hide the irreparable dilapidation within. And given his real good nature, it must be true that he suffered — suffered by reason of his useless, wasted life, by reason of all the money he cost his impoverished mother, and of the needs that were at last driving him to marry that wealthy deformed girl, whom at first he had simply pitied. And so weak did he seem to Eve, so like a piece of wreckage tossed hither and thither by a tempest, that, at the risk of being overheard by the throng, she let her heart flow forth in a low but ardent, entreating murmur: “If you suffer, ah! what sufferings are mine! — Gérard, we must see one another, I will have it so.”

“No, I beg you, let us wait,” he stammered in embarrassment.

“It must be, Gérard; Camille has told me your plans. You cannot refuse to see me. I insist on it.”

He made yet another attempt to escape the cruel explanation. “But it’s impossible at the usual place,” he answered, quivering. “The address is known.”

“Then to-morrow, at four o’clock, at that little restaurant in the Bois where we have met before.”

He had to promise, and they parted. Camille had just turned her head and was looking at them. Moreover, quite a number of women had besieged the stall; and the Baroness began to attend to them with the air of a ripe and nonchalant goddess, while Gérard re-

joined Duvillard, Fonsègue and Duthil, who were quite excited at the prospect of their dinner that evening.

Pierre had heard a part of the conversation between Gérard and the Baroness. He knew what skeletons the house concealed, what physiological and moral torture and wretchedness lay beneath all the dazzling wealth and power. There was here an envenomed, bleeding sore, ever spreading, a cancer eating into father, mother, daughter and son, who one and all had thrown social bonds aside. However, the priest made his way out of the *salons*, half stifling amidst the throng of lady-purchasers who were making quite a triumph of the bazaar. And yonder, in the depths of the gloom, he could picture Salvat still running and running on, while the corpse of Laveuve seemed to him like a buffet of atrocious irony dealt to noisy and delusive charity.



## II

### SPIRIT AND FLESH

How delightful was the quietude of the little ground-floor overlooking a strip of garden in the Rue Cortot, where good Abbé Rose resided! Hereabouts there was not even a rumble of wheels, or an echo of the panting breath of Paris, which one heard on the other side of the height of Montmartre. The deep silence and sleepy peacefulness were suggestive of some distant provincial town.

Seven o'clock had struck, the dusk had gathered slowly, and Pierre was in the humble dining-room, waiting for the *femme-de-ménage* to place the soup upon the table. Abbé Rose, anxious at having seen so little of him for a month past, had written, asking him to come to dinner, in order that they might have a quiet chat concerning their affairs. From time to time Pierre still gave his friend money for charitable purposes; in fact, ever since the days of the asylum in the Rue de Charonne, they had had accounts together, which they periodically liquidated. So that evening after dinner they were to talk of it all, and see if they could not do even more than they had hitherto done. The good old priest was quite radiant at the thought of the peaceful evening which he was about to spend in attending to the affairs of his beloved

poor; for therein lay his only amusement, the sole pleasure to which he persistently and passionately returned, in spite of all the worries that his inconsiderate charity had already so often brought him.

Glad to be able to procure his friend this pleasure, Pierre, on his side, grew calmer, and found relief and momentary repose in sharing the other's simple repast and yielding to all the kindness around him, far from his usual worries. He remembered the vacant bed at the Asylum, which Baroness Duvillard had promised to keep in reserve until he should have asked Abbé Rose if he knew of any case of destitution particularly worthy of interest: and so before sitting down to table he spoke of the matter.

"Destitution worthy of interest!" replied Abbé Rose, "ah! my dear child, every case is worthy of interest. And when it's a question of old toilers without work the only trouble is that of selection, the anguish of choosing one and leaving so many others in distress." Nevertheless, painful though his scruples were, he strove to think and come to some decision. "I know the case which will suit you," he said at last. "It's certainly one of the greatest suffering and wretchedness; and, so humble a one, too — an old carpenter of seventy-five, who has been living on public charity during the eight or ten years that he has been unable to find work. I don't know his name, everybody calls him 'the big Old'un'. There are times when he does not come to my Saturday distributions for weeks together. We shall have to look for him at once. I think that he sleeps at the Night Refuge in the Rue d'Orsel when lack of room there

doesn't force him to spend the night crouching behind some palings. Shall we go down the Rue d'Orsel this evening?"

Abbé Rose's eyes beamed brightly as he spoke, for this proposal of his signified a great debauch, the tasting of forbidden fruit. He had been reproached so often and so roughly with his visits to those who had fallen to the deepest want and misery, that in spite of his overflowing, apostolic compassion, he now scarcely dared to go near them. However, he continued: "Is it agreed, my child? Only this once? Besides, it is our only means of finding the big Old'un. You won't have to stop with me later than eleven. And I should so like to show you all that! You will see what terrible sufferings there are! And perhaps we may be fortunate enough to relieve some poor creature or other."

Pierre smiled at the juvenile ardour displayed by this old man with snowy hair. "It's agreed, my dear Abbé," he responded, "I shall be very pleased to spend my whole evening with you, for I feel it will do me good to follow you once more on one of those rambles which used to fill our hearts with grief and joy."

At this moment the servant brought in the soup; however, just as the two priests were taking their seats a discreet ring was heard, and when Abbé Rose learnt that the visitor was a neighbour, Madame Mathis, who had come for an answer, he gave orders that she should be shown in.

"This poor woman," he explained to Pierre, "needed an advance of ten francs to get a mattress out of pawn;

and I didn't have the money by me at the time. But I've since procured it. She lives in the house, you know, in silent poverty, on so small an income that it hardly keeps her in bread."

"But hasn't she a big son of twenty?" asked Pierre, suddenly remembering the young man he had seen at Salvat's.

"Yes, yes. Her parents, I believe, were rich people in the provinces. I've been told that she married a music master, who gave her lessons, at Nantes, and who ran away with her and brought her to Paris, where he died. It was quite a doleful love-story. By selling the furniture and realising every little thing she possessed, she scraped together an income of about two thousand francs a year, with which she was able to send her son to college and live decently herself. But a fresh blow fell on her—she lost the greater part of her little fortune, which was invested in doubtful securities. So now her income amounts at the utmost to eight hundred francs, two hundred of which she has to expend in rent. For all her other wants she has to be content with fifty francs a month. About eighteen months ago her son left her so as not to be a burden on her, and he is trying to earn his living somewhere, but without success, I believe."

Madame Mathis, a short, dark woman, with a sad, gentle, retiring face, came in. Invariably clad in the same black gown, she showed all the anxious timidity of a poor creature whom the storms of life perpetually assailed. When Abbé Rose had handed her the ten francs discreetly wrapped in paper, she blushed and thanked him, promising to pay him back as soon

as she received her month's money, for she was not a beggar and did not wish to encroach on the share of those who starved.

"And your son, Victor, has he found any employment?" asked the old priest.

She hesitated, ignorant as she was of what her son might be doing, for now she did not see him for weeks together. And finally, she contented herself with answering: "He has a good heart, he is very fond of me. It is a great misfortune that we should have been ruined before he could enter the *École Normale*. It was impossible for him to prepare for the examination. But at the *Lycée* he was such a diligent and intelligent pupil!"

"You lost your husband when your son was ten years old, did you not?" said Abbé Rose.

At this she blushed again, thinking that her husband's story was known to the two priests. "Yes, my poor husband never had any luck," she said. "His difficulties embittered and excited his mind, and he died in prison. He was sent there through a disturbance at a public meeting, when he had the misfortune to wound a police officer. He had also fought at the time of the Commune. And yet he was a very gentle man and extremely fond of me."

Tears had risen to her eyes; and Abbé Rose, much touched, dismissed her: "Well, let us hope that your son will give you satisfaction, and be able to repay you for all you have done for him."

With a gesture of infinite sorrow, Madame Mathis discreetly withdrew. She was quite ignorant of her

son's doings, but fate had pursued her so relentlessly that she ever trembled.

"I don't think that the poor woman has much to expect from her son," said Pierre, when she had gone. "I only saw him once, but the gleam in his eyes was as harsh and trenchant as that of a knife."

"Do you think so?" the old priest exclaimed, with his kindly *naïveté*. "Well, he seemed to me very polite, perhaps a trifle eager to enjoy life; but then, all the young folks are impatient nowadays. Come, let us sit down to table, for the soup will be cold."

Almost at the same hour, on the other side of Paris, night had in like fashion slowly fallen in the drawing-room of the Countess de Quinsac, on the dismal, silent ground-floor of an old mansion in the Rue St. Dominique. The Countess was there, alone with her faithful friend, the Marquis de Morigny, she on one side, and he on the other side of the chimney-piece, where the last embers of the wood fire were dying out. The servant had not yet brought the lamp, and the Countess refrained from ringing, finding some relief from her anxiety in the falling darkness, which hid from view all the unconfessed thoughts that she was afraid of showing on her weary face. And it was only now, before that dim hearth, and in that black room, where never a sound of wheels disturbed the silence of the slumberous past, that she dared to speak.

"Yes, my friend," she said, "I am not satisfied with Gérard's health. You will see him yourself, for he promised to come home early and dine with me. Oh! I'm well aware that he looks big and strong; but to know him properly one must have nursed and

watched him as I have done! What trouble I had to rear him! In reality he is at the mercy of any petty ailment. His slightest complaint becomes serious illness. And the life he leads does not conduce to good health."

She paused and sighed, hesitating to carry her confession further.

"He leads the life he can," slowly responded the Marquis de Morigny, of whose delicate profile, and lofty yet loving bearing, little could be seen in the gloom. "As he was unable to endure military life, and as even the fatigues of diplomacy frighten you, what would you have him do? He can only live apart pending the final collapse, while this abominable Republic is dragging France to the grave."

"No doubt, my friend. And yet it is just that idle life which frightens me. He is losing in it all that was good and healthy in him. I don't refer merely to the *liaisons* which we have had to tolerate. The last one, which I found so much difficulty in countenancing at the outset, so contrary did it seem to all my ideas and beliefs, has since seemed to me to exercise almost a good influence. Only he is now entering his thirty-sixth year, and can he continue living in this fashion without object or duties? If he is ailing it is perhaps precisely because he does nothing, holds no position, and serves no purpose." Her voice again quavered. "And then, my friend, since you force me to tell you everything, I must own that I am not in good health myself. I have had several fainting fits of late, and have consulted a doctor. The truth is, that I may go off at any moment."

With a quiver, Morigny leant forward in the still deepening gloom, and wished to take hold of her hands. "You! what, am I to lose you, my last affection!" he faltered, "I who have seen the old world I belong to crumble away, I who only live in the hope that you at all events will still be here to close my eyes!"

But she begged him not to increase her grief: "No, no, don't take my hands, don't kiss them! Remain there in the shade, where I can scarcely see you. . . . We have loved one another so long without aught to cause shame or regret; and that will prove our strength — our divine strength — till we reach the grave. . . . And if you were to touch me, if I were to feel you too near me I could not finish, for I have not done so yet."

As soon as he had relapsed into silence and immobility, she continued: "If I were to die to-morrow, Gérard would not even find here the little fortune which he still fancies is in my hands. The dear child has often cost me large sums of money without apparently being conscious of it. I ought to have been more severe, more prudent. But what would you have? Ruin is at hand. I have always been too weak a mother. And do you now understand in what anguish I live? I ever have the thought that if I die Gérard will not even possess enough to live on, for he is incapable of effecting the miracle which I renew each day, in order to keep the house up on a decent footing. . . . Ah! I know him, so supine, so sickly, in spite of his proud bearing, unable to do anything, even conduct himself. And so what will become of him; will he not fall into the most dire distress?"



Then her tears flowed freely, her heart opened and bled, for she foresaw what must happen after her death — the collapse of her race and of a whole world in the person of that big child. And the Marquis, still motionless but distracted, feeling that he had no title to offer his own fortune, suddenly understood her, foresaw in what disgrace this fresh disaster would culminate.

“Ah! my poor friend!” he said at last in a voice trembling with revolt and grief. “So you have agreed to that marriage — yes, that abominable marriage with that woman’s daughter! Yet you swore it should never be! You would rather witness the collapse of everything, you said. And now you are consenting, I can feel it!”

She still wept on in that black, silent drawing-room before the chimney-piece where the fire had died out. Did not Gérard’s marriage to Camille mean a happy ending for herself, a certainty of leaving her son wealthy, loved, and seated at the banquet of life? However, a last feeling of rebellion arose within her.

“No, no,” she exclaimed, “I don’t consent, I swear to you that I don’t consent as yet. I am fighting with my whole strength, waging an incessant battle, the torture of which you cannot imagine.”

Then, in all sincerity, she foresaw the likelihood of defeat. “If I should some day give way, my friend, at all events believe that I feel, as fully as you do, how abominable such a marriage must be. It will be the end of our race and our honour!”

This cry profoundly stirred the Marquis, and he was unable to add a word. Haughty and uncompro-

missing Catholic and Royalist that he was, he, on his side also, expected nothing but the supreme collapse. Yet how heartrending was the thought that this noble woman, so dearly and so purely loved, would prove one of the most mournful victims of the catastrophe! And in the shrouding gloom he found courage to kneel before her, take her hand, and kiss it.

Just as the servant was at last bringing a lighted lamp Gérard made his appearance. The past-century charm of the old Louis XVI. drawing-room, with its pale woodwork, again became apparent in the soft light. In order that his mother might not be over-saddened by his failure to dine with her that evening the young man had put on an air of brisk gaiety; and when he had explained that some friends were waiting for him, she at once released him from his promise, happy as she felt at seeing him so merry.

"Go, go, my dear boy," said she, "but mind you do not tire yourself too much. . . . I am going to keep Morigny; and the General and Larombière are coming at nine o'clock. So be easy, I shall have someone with me to keep me from fretting and feeling lonely."

In this wise Gérard after sitting down for a moment and chatting with the Marquis was able to slip away, dress, and betake himself to the *Café Anglais*.

When he reached it women in fur cloaks were already climbing the stairs, fashionable and merry parties were filling the private rooms, the electric lights shone brilliantly, and the walls were already vibrating with the stir of pleasure and debauchery. In the room which Baron Duvillard had engaged the young man found an extraordinary display, the most

superb flowers, and a profusion of plate and crystal as for a royal gala. The pomp with which the six covers were laid called forth a smile; while the bill of fare and the wine list promised marvels, all the rarest and most expensive things that could be selected.

"It's stylish, isn't it?" exclaimed Silviane, who was already there with Duvillard, Fonsègue and Duthil. "I just wanted to make your influential critic open his eyes a little! When one treats a journalist to such a dinner as this, he has got to be amiable, hasn't he?"

In her desire to conquer, it had occurred to the young woman to array herself in the most amazing fashion. Her gown of yellow satin, covered with old Alençon lace, was cut low at the neck; and she had put on all her diamonds, a necklace, a diadem, shoulder-knots, bracelets and rings. With her candid, girlish face, she looked like some Virgin in a missal, a Queen-Virgin, laden with the offerings of all Christendom.

"Well, well, you look so pretty," said Gérard, who sometimes jested with her, "that I think it will do all the same."

"Ah!" she replied with equanimity. "You consider me a *bourgeoise*, I see. Your opinion is that a simple little dinner and a modest gown would have shown better taste. But ah! my dear fellow, you don't know the way to get round men!"

Duvillard signified his approval, for he was delighted to be able to show her in all her glory, adorned like an idol. Fonsègue, for his part, talked of dia-

monds, saying that they were now doubtful investments, as the day when they would become articles of current manufacture was fast approaching, thanks to the electrical furnace and other inventions. Meantime Duthil, with an air of ecstasy and the dainty gestures of a lady's maid, hovered around the young woman, either smoothing a rebellious bow or arranging some fold of her lace.

"But I say," resumed Silviane, "your critic seems to be an ill-bred man, for he's keeping us waiting "

Indeed, the critic arrived a quarter of an hour late, and while apologising, he expressed his regret that he should be obliged to leave at half-past nine, for he was absolutely compelled to put in an appearance at a little theatre in the Rue Pigalle. He was a big fellow of fifty with broad shoulders and a full, bearded face. His most disagreeable characteristic was the narrow dogmatic pedantry which he had acquired at the École Normale, and had never since been able to shake off. All his herculean efforts to be sceptical and frivolous, and the twenty years he had spent in Paris mingling with every section of society, had failed to rid him of it. *Magister* he was, and *magister* he remained, even in his most strenuous flights of imagination and audacity. From the moment of his arrival he tried to show himself enraptured with Silviane. Naturally enough, he already knew her by sight, and had even criticised her on one occasion in five or six contemptuous lines. However, the sight of her there, in full beauty, clad like a queen, and presented by four influential protectors, filled him with emotion; and he was struck with the idea that nothing would

be more Parisian and less pedantic than to assert she had some talent and give her his support.

They had seated themselves at table, and the repast proved a magnificent one, the service ever prompt and assiduous, an attendant being allotted to each diner. While the flowers scattered their perfumes through the room, and the plate and crystal glittered on the snowy cloth, an abundance of delicious and unexpected dishes were handed round — a sturgeon from Russia, prohibited game, truffles as big as eggs, and hothouse vegetables and fruit as full of flavour as if they had been naturally matured. It was money flung out of window, simply for the pleasure of wasting more than other people, and eating what they could not procure. The influential critic, though he displayed the ease of a man accustomed to every sort of festivity, really felt astonished at it all, and became servile, promising his support, and pledging himself far more than he really wished to. Moreover, he showed himself very gay, found some witty remarks to repeat, and even some rather ribald jests. But when the champagne appeared after the roast and the grand burgundies, his over-excitement brought him back perforce to his real nature. The conversation had now turned on *Corneille's* "Polyeucte" and the part of "Pauline," in which *Silviane* wished to make her *début* at the *Comédie Française*. This extraordinary caprice, which had quite revolted the influential critic a week previously, now seemed to him simply a bold enterprise in which the young woman might even prove victorious if she consented to listen to his advice. And, once started, he delivered quite a lecture on the past, assert-

ing that no actress had ever yet understood it properly, for at the outset Pauline was simply a well-meaning little creature of the middle classes, and the beauty of her conversion at the finish arose from the working of a miracle, a stroke of heavenly grace which endowed her with something divine. This was not the opinion of Silviane, who from the first lines regarded Pauline as the ideal heroine of some symbolical legend. However, as the critic talked on and on, she had to feign approval, and he was delighted at finding her so beautiful and docile beneath his ferule. At last, as ten o'clock was striking, he rose and tore out of the hot and reeking room in order to do his work.

"Ah! my dears," cried Silviane, "he's a nice bore is that critic of yours! What a fool he is with his idea of Pauline being a little *bourgeoise*! I would have given him a fine dressing if it weren't for the fact that I have some need of him. Ah! no, it's too idiotic! Pour me out a glass of champagne. I want something to set me right after all that!"

The *fête* then took quite an intimate turn between the four men who remained and that bare-armed, bare-breasted girl, covered with diamonds; while from the neighbouring passages and rooms came bursts of laughter and sounds of kissing, all the stir and mirth of the debauchery now filling the house. And beneath the windows torrents of vehicles and pedestrians streamed along the Boulevards where reigned the wild fever of pleasure and harlotry.

"No, don't open it, or I shall catch cold!" resumed Silviane, addressing Fonsèque as he stepped towards the window. "Are you so very warm, then? I'm

ust comfortable. . . . But, Duvillard, my good fellow, please order some more champagne. It's wonderful what a thirst your critic has given me' "

Amidst the blinding glare of the lamps and the perfume of the flowers and wines, one almost stifled in the room. And Silviane was seized with an irresistible desire for a spree, a desire to tittle and amuse herself in some vulgar fashion, as in her bygone days. A few glasses of champagne brought her to full pitch, and she showed the boldest and giddiest gaiety. The others, who had never before seen her so lively, began on their own side to feel amused. As Fonsègue was obliged to go to his office she embraced him "like a laughter," as she expressed it. However, on remaining alone with the others she indulged in great freedom of speech, which became more and more marked as her intoxication increased. And to the class of men with whom she consorted her great attraction, as he was well aware, lay in the circumstance that with her virginal countenance and her air of ideal purity was coupled the most monstrous perversity ever displayed by any shameless woman. Despite her innocent blue eyes and lily-like candour, she would give rein, particularly when she was drunk, to the most diabolical of fancies.

Duvillard let her drink on, but she guessed his thoughts, like she guessed those of the others, and simply smiled while concocting impossible stories and descanting fantastically in the language of the gutter. And seeing her there in her dazzling gown fit for a queenly virgin, and hearing her pour forth the vilest words, they thought her most wonderfully droll.

However, when she had drunk as much champagne as she cared for and was half crazy, a novel idea suddenly occurred to her.

"I say, my children," she exclaimed, "we are surely not going to stop here. It's so precious slow! You shall take me to the Chamber of Horrors — eh? just to finish the evening I want to hear Legras sing 'La Chemise,' that song which all Paris is running to hear him sing."

But Duvillard indignantly rebelled. "Oh! no," said he; "most certainly not. It's a vile song and I'll never take you to such an abominable place."

But she did not appear to hear him. She had already staggered to her feet and was arranging her hair before a looking-glass. "I used to live at Montmartre," she said, "and it'll amuse me to go back there. And, besides, I want to know if this Legras is a Legras that I knew, oh! ever so long ago! Come, up you get, and let us be off!"

"But, my dear girl," pleaded Duvillard, "we can't take you into that den dressed as you are! Just fancy your entering that place in a low-necked gown and covered with diamonds! Why everyone would jeer at us! Come, Gérard, just tell her to be a little reasonable."

Gérard, equally offended by the idea of such a freak, was quite willing to intervene. But she closed his mouth with her gloved hand and repeated with the gay obstinacy of intoxication: "Pooh, it will be all the more amusing if they do jeer at us! Come, let us be off, let us be off, quick!"

Thereupon Duthil, who had been listening with a



smile and the air of a man of pleasure whom nothing astonishes or displeases, gallantly took her part. "But, my dear Baron, everybody goes to the Chamber of Horrors," said he. "Why, I myself have taken the noblest ladies there, and precisely to hear that song of Legras, which is no worse than anything else."

"Ah! you hear what Duthil says!" cried Silviane. "He's a deputy, he is, and he wouldn't go there if he thought it would compromise his honorability!"

Then, as Duvillard still struggled on in despair at the idea of exhibiting himself with her in such a scandalous place, she became all the merrier: "Well, my dear fellow, please yourself. I don't need you. You and Gérard can go home if you like. But I'm going to Montmartre with Duthil. You'll take charge of me, won't you, Duthil, eh?"

Still, the Baron was in no wise disposed to let the evening finish in that fashion. The mere idea of it gave him a shock, and he had to resign himself to the girl's stubborn caprice. The only consolation he could think of was to secure Gérard's presence, for the young man, with some lingering sense of decorum, still obstinately refused to make one of the party. So the Baron took his hands and detained him, repeating in urgent tones that he begged him to come as an essential mark of friendship. And at last the wife's lover and daughter's suitor had to give way to the man who was the former's husband and the latter's father.

Silviane was immensely amused by it all, and, indiscreetly thee-ing and thou-ing Gérard, suggested that he at least owed the Baron some little compliance with his wishes.

Duvillard pretended not to hear her. He was listening to Duthil, who told him that there was a sort of box in a corner of the Chamber of Horrors, in which one could in some measure conceal oneself. And then, as Silviane's carriage—a large closed landau, whose coachman, a sturdy, handsome fellow, sat waiting impassively on his box—was down below, they started off.

The Chamber of Horrors was installed in premises on the Boulevard de Rochechouart, formerly occupied by a café whose proprietor had become bankrupt.<sup>1</sup> It was a suffocating place, narrow, irregular, with all sorts of twists, turns, and secluded nooks, and a low and smoky ceiling. And nothing could have been more rudimentary than its decorations. The walls had simply been placarded with posters of violent hues, some of the crudest character, showing the barest of female figures. Behind a piano at one end there was a little platform reached by a curtained doorway. For the rest, one simply found a number of bare wooden forms set alongside the veriest pot-house tables, on which the glasses containing various beverages left round and sticky marks. There was no luxury, no artistic feature, no cleanliness even. Globeless gas burners flared freely, heating a dense

<sup>1</sup> Those who know Paris will identify the site selected by M. Zola as that where 'Colonel' Lisbonne of the Commune installed his den the 'Bagne' some years ago. Nevertheless, such places as the 'Chamber of Horrors' now abound in the neighbourhood of Montmartre, and it must be admitted that whilst they are frequented by certain classes of Frenchmen they owe much of their success in a pecuniary sense to the patronage of foreigners. Among the latter, Englishmen are particularly conspicuous, — *Trans.*

mist compounded of tobacco smoke and human breath. Perspiring, apoplectical faces could be perceived through this veil, and an acrid odour increased the intoxication of the assembly, which excited itself with louder and louder shouts at each fresh song. It had been sufficient for an enterprising fellow to set up these boards, bring out Legras, accompanied by two or three girls, make him sing his frantic and abominable songs, and in two or three evenings overwhelming success had come, all Paris being enticed and flocking to the place, which for ten years or so had failed to pay as a mere café, where by way of amusement petty cits had been simply allowed their daily games at dominoes.

And the change had been caused by the passion for filth, the irresistible attraction exercised by all that brought opprobrium and disgust. The Paris of enjoyment, the *bourgeoisie* which held all wealth and power, which would relinquish naught of either, though it was surfeited and gradually wearying of both, simply hastened to the place in order that obscenity and insult might be flung in its face. Hypnotised, as it were, while staggering to its fall, it felt a need of being spat upon. And what a frightful symptom there lay in it all: those condemned ones rushing upon dirt of their own accord, voluntarily hastening their own decomposition by that unquenchable thirst for the vile, which attracted men, reputed to be grave and upright, and lovely women of the most perfect grace and luxury, to all the beastliness of that low den!

At one of the tables nearest the stage sat little

Princess Rosemonde de Harn, with wild eyes and quivering nostrils, delighted as she felt at now being able to satisfy her curiosity regarding the depths of Paris life. Young Hyacinthe had resigned himself to the task of bringing her, and, correctly buttoned up in his long frock-coat, he was indulgent enough to refrain from any marked expression of boredom. At a neighbouring table they had found a shadowy Spaniard of their acquaintance, a so-called Bourse jobber, Bergaz, who had been introduced to the Princess by Janzen, and usually attended her entertainments. They virtually knew nothing about him, not even if he really earned at the Bourse all the money which he sometimes spent so lavishly, and which enabled him to dress with affected elegance. His slim, lofty figure was not without a certain air of distinction, but his red lips spoke of strong passions and his bright eyes were those of a beast of prey. That evening he had two young fellows with him, one Rossi, a short, swarthy Italian, who had come to Paris as a painter's model, and had soon glided into the lazy life of certain disreputable callings, and the other, Sanfaute, a born Parisian blackguard, a pale, beardless, vicious and impudent stripling of La Chapelle, whose long curly hair fell down upon either side of his bony cheeks.

"Oh! pray now!" feverishly said Rosemonde to Bergaz; "as you seem to know all these horrid people, just show me some of the celebrities. Aren't there some thieves and murderers among them?"

He laughed shrilly, and in a bantering way replied. "But you know these people well enough, madame.

That pretty, pink, delicate-looking woman over yonder is an American lady, the wife of a consul, whom, I believe, you receive at your house. That other on the right, that tall brunette who shows such queenly dignity, is a Countess, whose carriage passes yours every day in the Bois. And the thin one yonder, whose eyes glitter like those of a she-wolf, is the particular friend of a high official, who is well known for his reputation of austerity."

But she stopped him, in vexation: "I know, I know. But the others, those of the lower classes, those whom one comes to see."

Then she went on asking questions, and seeking for terrifying and mysterious countenances. At last, two men seated in a corner ended by attracting her attention; one of them a very young fellow with a pale, pinched face, and the other an ageless individual who, besides being buttoned up to his neck in an old coat, had pulled his cap so low over his eyes, that one saw little of his face beyond the beard which fringed it. Before these two stood a couple of mugs of beer, which they drank slowly and in silence.

"You are making a great mistake, my dear," said Hyacinthe with a frank laugh, "if you are looking for brigands in disguise. That poor fellow with the pale face, who surely doesn't have food to eat every day, was my schoolfellow at Condorcet!"

Bergaz expressed his amazement. "What! you knew Mathis at Condorcet! After all, though, you're right, he received a college education. Ah! and so you knew him. A very remarkable young man he is, though want is throttling him. But, I say,

the other one, his companion, you don't know him?"

Hyacinthe, after looking at the man with the cap-hidden face, was already shaking his head, when Bergaz suddenly gave him a nudge as a signal to keep quiet, and by way of explanation he muttered: "Hush! Here's Raphanel. I've been distrusting him for some time past. Whenever he appears anywhere, the police is not far off"

Raphanel was another of the vague, mysterious Anarchists whom Janzen had presented to the Princess by way of satisfying her momentary passion for revolutionism. This one, though he was a fat, gay, little man, with a doll-like face and childish nose, which almost disappeared between his puffy cheeks, had the reputation of being a thorough desperado; and at public meetings he certainly shouted for fire and murder with all his lungs. Still, although he had already been compromised in various affairs, he had invariably managed to save his own bacon, whilst his companions were kept under lock and key; and this they were now beginning to think somewhat singular.

He at once shook hands with the Princess in a jovial way, took a seat near her without being invited, and forthwith denounced the dirty *bourgeoisie* which came to wallow in places of ill fame. Rosemonde was delighted, and encouraged him, but others near by began to get angry, and Bergaz examined him with his piercing eyes, like a man of energy who acts, and lets others talk. Now and then, too, he exchanged quick glances of intelligence with his silent lieutenants, Sanfaute and Rossi, who plainly belonged to

him, both body and soul. They were the ones who found their profit in Anarchy, practising it to its logical conclusions, whether in crime or in vice.

Meantime, pending the arrival of Legras with his "Flowers of the Pavement," two female vocalists had followed one another on the stage, the first fat and the second thin, one chirruping some silly love songs with an under-current of dirt, and the other shouting the coarsest of refrains, in a most violent, fighting voice. She had just finished amidst a storm of bravos, when the assembly, stirred to merriment and eager for a laugh, suddenly exploded once more. Silviane was entering the little box at one end of the hall. When she appeared erect in the full light, with bare arms and shoulders, looking like a planet in her gown of yellow satin and her blazing diamonds, there arose a formidable uproar, shouts, jeers, hisses, laughing and growling, mingled with ferocious applause. And the scandal increased, and the vilest expressions flew about as soon as Duvillard, Gérard and Duthil also showed themselves, looking very serious and dignified with their white ties and spreading shirt fronts.

"We told you so!" muttered Duvillard, who was much annoyed with the affair, while Gérard tried to conceal himself in a dim corner.

She, however, smiling and enchanted, faced the public, accepting the storm with the candid bearing of a foolish virgin, much as one inhales the vivifying air of the open when it bears down upon one in a squall. And, indeed, she herself had sprung from the sphere before her, its atmosphere was her native air.

"Well, what of it?" she said replying to the Baron who wanted her to sit down. "They are merry. It's very nice. Oh! I'm really amusing myself!"

"Why, yes, it's very nice," declared Duthil, who in like fashion set himself at his ease. "Silviane is right, people naturally like a laugh now and then!"

Amidst the uproar, which did not cease, little Princess Rosemonde rose enthusiastically to get a better view. "Why, it's your father who's with that woman Silviane," she said to Hyacinthe. "Just look at them! Well, he certainly has plenty of bounce to show himself here with her!"

Hyacinthe, however, refused to look. It didn't interest him, his father was an idiot, only a child would lose his head over a girl in that fashion. And with his contempt for woman the young man became positively insulting.

"You try my nerves, my dear fellow," said Rosemonde as she sat down. "You are the child with your silly ideas about us. And as for your father, he does quite right to love that girl. I find her very pretty indeed, quite adorable!"

Then all at once the uproar ceased, those who had risen resumed their seats, and the only sound was that of the feverish throb which coursed through the assembly. Legras had just appeared on the platform. He was a pale sturdy fellow with a round and carefully shaven face, stern eyes, and the powerful jaws of a man who compels the adoration of women by terrorising them. He was not deficient in talent, he sang true, and his ringing voice was one of extraordinary penetration and pathetic power. And his *réper-*



*toire*, his "Flowers of the Pavement," completed the explanation of his success; for all the foulness and suffering of the lower spheres, the whole abominable sore of the social hell created by the rich, shrieked aloud in these songs in words of filth and fire and blood.

A prelude was played on the piano, and Legras standing there in his velvet jacket sang "La Chemise," the horrible song which brought all Paris to hear him. All the lust and vice that crowd the streets of the great city appeared with their filth and their poison; and amid the picture of Woman stripped, degraded, ill-treated, dragged through the mire and cast into a cesspool, there rang out the crime of the *bourgeoisie*. But the scorching insult of it all was less in the words themselves than in the manner in which Legras cast them in the faces of the rich, the happy, the beautiful ladies who came to listen to him. Under the low ceiling, amidst the smoke from the pipes, in the blinding glare of the gas, he sent his lines flying through the assembly like expectorations, projected by a whirlwind of furious contempt. And when he had finished there came delirium; the beautiful ladies did not even think of wiping away the many affronts they had received, but applauded frantically. The whole assembly stamped and shouted, and wallowed, distracted, in its ignominy.

"Bravo! bravo!" the little Princess repeated in her shrill voice. "It's astonishing, astonishing, prodigious!"

And Silviane, whose intoxication seemed to have increased since she had been there, in the depths of

that fiery furnace, made herself particularly conspicuous by the manner in which she clapped her hands and shouted: "It's he, it's my Legras! I really must kiss him, he's pleased me so much!"

Duvillard, now fairly exasperated, wished to take her off by force. But she clung to the hand-rest of the box, and shouted yet more loudly, though without any show of temper. It became necessary to parley with her. Yes, she was willing to go off and let them drive her home; but, first of all, she must embrace Legras, who was an old friend of hers. "Go and wait for me in the carriage!" she said, "I will be with you in a moment."

Just as the assembly was at last becoming calmer, Rosemonde perceived that the box was emptying; and her own curiosity being satisfied, she thought of prevailing on Hyacinthe to see her home. He, who had listened to Legras in a languid way without even applauding, was now talking of Norway with Bergaz, who pretended that he had travelled in the North. Oh! the fiords! oh! the ice-bound lakes! oh! the pure lily-white, chaste coldness of the eternal winter! It was only amid such surroundings, said Hyacinthe, that he could understand woman and love, like a kiss of the very snow itself.

"Shall we go off there to-morrow?" exclaimed the Princess with her vivacious effrontery. "I'll shut up my house and slip the key under the door."

Then she added that she was jesting, of course. But Bergaz knew her to be quite capable of such a freak; and at the idea that she might shut up her little mansion and perhaps leave it unprotected he

exchanged a quick glance with Sanfaute and Rossi, who still smiled in silence. Ah! what an opportunity for a fine stroke! What an opportunity to get back some of the wealth of the community appropriated by the blackguard *bourgeoisie*!

Meantime Raphanel, after applauding Legras, was looking all round the place with his little grey, sharp eyes. And at last young Mathis and his companion, the ill-clad individual, of whose face only a scrap of beard could be seen, attracted his attention. They had neither laughed nor applauded; they seemed to be simply a couple of tired fellows who were resting, and in whose opinion one is best hidden in the midst of a crowd.

All at once, though, Raphanel turned towards Bergaz: "That's surely little Mathis over yonder. But who's that with him?"

Bergaz made an evasive gesture; he did not know. Still, he no longer took his eyes from Raphanel. And he saw the other feign indifference at what followed, and finish his beer and take his leave, with the jesting remark that he had an appointment with a lady at a neighbouring omnibus office. No sooner had he gone than Bergaz rose, sprang over some of the forms and jostled people in order to reach little Mathis, into whose ear he whispered a few words. And the young man at once left his table, taking his companion and pushing him outside through an occasional exit. It was all so rapidly accomplished that none of the general public paid attention to the flight.

"What is it?" said the Princess to Bergaz, when

he had quietly resumed his seat between Rossi and Sanfaute.

"Oh! nothing, I merely wished to shake hands with Mathis as he was going off."

Thereupon Rosemonde announced that she meant to do the same. Nevertheless, she lingered a moment longer and again spoke of Norway on perceiving that nothing could impassion Hyacinthe except the idea of the eternal snow, the intense, purifying cold of the polar regions. In his poem on the "End of Woman," a composition of some thirty lines, which he hoped he should never finish, he thought of introducing a forest of frozen pines by way of final scene. Now the Princess had risen and was gaily reverting to her jest, declaring that she meant to take him home to drink a cup of tea and arrange their trip to the Pole, when an involuntary exclamation fell from Bergaz, who, while listening, had kept his eyes on the doorway.

"Mondésir! I was sure of it!"

There had appeared at the entrance a short, sinewy, broad-backed little man, about whose round face, bumpy forehead, and snub nose there was considerable military roughness. One might have thought him a non-commissioned officer in civilian attire. He gazed over the whole room, and seemed at once dismayed and disappointed.

Bergaz, however, wishing to account for his exclamation, resumed in an easy way: "Ah! I said there was a smell of the police about the place! You see that fellow—he's a detective, a very clever one, named Mondésir, who had some trouble when he was

in the army. Just look at him, sniffing like a dog that has lost scent! Well, well, my brave fellow, if you've been told of any game you may look and look for it, the bird's flown already!"

Once outside, when Rosemonde had prevailed on Hyacinthe to see her home, they hastened to get into the brougham, which was waiting for them, for near at hand they perceived Silviane's landau, with the majestic coachman motionless on his box, while Duvillard, Gérard, and Duthil still stood waiting on the curbstone. They had been there for nearly twenty minutes already, in the semi-darkness of that outer boulevard, where all the vices of the poor districts of Paris were on the prowl. They had been jostled by drunkards; and shadowy women brushed against them as they went by whispering beneath the oaths and blows of bullies. And there were couples seeking the darkness under the trees, and lingering on the benches there; while all around were low taverns and dirty lodging-houses and places of ill-fame. All the human degradation which till break of day swarms in the black mud of this part of Paris, enveloped the three men, giving them the horrors, and yet neither the Baron nor Gérard nor Duthil was willing to go off. Each hoped that he would tire out the others, and take Silviane home when she should at last appear.

But after a time the Baron grew impatient, and said to the coachman: "Jules, go and see why madame doesn't come."

"But the horses, Monsieur le Baron?"

"Oh! they will be all right, we are here."

A fine drizzle had begun to fall; and the wait

went on again as if it would never finish. But an unexpected meeting gave them momentary occupation. A shadowy form, something which seemed to be a thin, black-skirted woman, brushed against them. And all of a sudden they were surprised to find it was a priest.

"What, is it you, Monsieur l'Abbé Froment?" exclaimed Gérard. "At this time of night? And in this part of Paris?"

Thereupon Pierre, without venturing either to express his own astonishment at finding them there themselves, or to ask them what they were doing, explained that he had been belated through accompanying Abbé Rose on a visit to a night refuge. Ah! to think of all the frightful want which at last drifted to those pestilential dormitories where the stench had almost made him faint! To think of all the weariness and despair which there sank into the slumber of utter prostration, like that of beasts falling to the ground to sleep off the abominations of life! No name could be given to the promiscuity; poverty and suffering were there in heaps, children and men, young and old, beggars in sordid rags, beside the shameful poor in threadbare frock-coats, all the waifs and strays of the daily shipwrecks of Paris life, all the laziness and vice, and ill-luck and injustice which the torrent rolls on, and throws off like scum. Some slept on, quite annihilated, with the faces of corpses. Others, lying on their backs with mouths agape, snored loudly as if still venting the plant of their sorry life. And others tossed restlessly, still struggling in their slumber against fatigue and cold and hunger, which pursued

them like nightmares of monstrous shape. And from all those human beings, stretched there like wounded after a battle, from all that ambulance of life reeking with a stench of rottenness and death, there ascended a nausea born of revolt, the vengeance-prompting thought of all the happy chambers where, at that same hour, the wealthy loved or rested in fine linen and costly lace.<sup>1</sup>

In vain had Pierre and Abbé Rose passed all the poor wretches in review while seeking the big Old'un, the former carpenter, so as to rescue him from the cesspool of misery, and send him to the Asylum on the very morrow. He had presented himself at the refuge that evening, but there was no room left, for, horrible to say, even the shelter of that hell could only be granted to early comers. And so he must now be leaning against a wall, or lying behind some palings. This had greatly distressed poor Abbé Rose

<sup>1</sup> Even the oldest Paris night refuges, which are the outcome of private philanthropy — L'Œuvre de l'Hospitalité de Nuit — have only been in existence some fourteen or fifteen years. Before that time, and from the period of the great Revolution forward, there was absolutely no place, either refuge, asylum, or workhouse, in the whole of that great city of wealth and pleasure, where the houseless poor could crave a night's shelter. The various royalist, imperialist and republican governments and municipalities of modern France have often been described as 'paternal,' but no governments and municipalities in the whole civilised world have done less for the very poor. The official Poor Relief Board — L'Assistance Publique — has for fifty years been a by-word, a mockery and a sham, in spite of its large revenue. And this neglect of the very poor has been an important factor in every French revolution. Each of these — even that of 1870 — had its purely economic side, though many superficial historians are content to ascribe economic causes to the one Revolution of 1789, and to pass them by in all other instances. — *Trans.*

and Pierre, but it was impossible for them to search every dark, suspicious corner, and so the former had returned to the Rue Cortot, while the latter was seeking a cab to convey him back to Neuilly.

The fine drizzling rain was still falling and becoming almost icy, when Silviane's coachman, Jules, at last reappeared and interrupted the priest, who was telling the Baron and the others how his visit to the refuge still made him shudder.

"Well, Jules—and madame?" asked Duvillard, quite anxious at seeing the coachman return alone.

Impassive and respectful, with no other sign of irony than a slight involuntary twist of the lips, Jules answered: "Madame sends word that she is not going home, and she places her carriage at the gentlemen's disposal if they will allow me to drive them home."

This was the last straw, and the Baron flew into a passion. To have allowed her to drag him to that vile den, to have waited there hopefully so long, and to be treated in this fashion for the sake of a Legras! No, no, he, the Baron, had had enough of it, and she should pay dearly for her abominable conduct! Then he stopped a passing cab and pushed Gérard inside it saying, "You can set me down at my door."

"But she's left us the carriage!" shouted Duthil, who was already consoled, and inwardly laughed at the termination of it all. "Come here, there's plenty of room for three. No? you prefer the cab? Well, just as you like, you know."

For his part he gaily climbed into the landau and drove off lounging on the cushions, while the Baron, in the jolting old cab, vented his rage without a word



of interruption from Gérard, whose face was hidden by the darkness. To think of it! that she, whom he had overwhelmed with gifts, who had already cost him two millions of francs, should in this fashion insult him, the master who could dispose both of fortunes and of men! Well, she had chosen to do it, and he was delivered! Then Duvillard drew a long breath like a man released from the galleys.

For a moment Pierre watched the two vehicles go off; and then took his own way under the trees, so as to shelter himself from the rain until a vacant cab should pass. Full of distress and battling thoughts he had begun to feel icy cold. The whole monstrous night of Paris, all the debauchery and woe that sobbed around him made him shiver. Phantom-like women who, when young, had led lives of infamy in wealth, and who now, old and faded, led lives of infamy in poverty, were still and ever wandering past him in search of bread, when suddenly a shadowy form grazed him, and a voice murmured in his ear: "Warn your brother, the police are on Salvat's track, he may be arrested at any moment."

The shadowy figure was already going its way, and as a gas ray fell upon it, Pierre thought that he recognised the pale, pinched face of Victor Mathis. And at the same time, yonder in Abbé Rose's peaceful dining-room, he fancied he could again see the gentle face of Madame Mathis, so sad and so resigned, living on solely by the force of the last trembling hope which she had unhappily set in her son.

### III

#### PLOT AND COUNTERPLOT

ALREADY at eight o'clock on that holiday-making mid-Lent Thursday, when all the offices of the Home Department were empty, Monferrand, the Minister, sat alone in his private room. A single usher guarded his door, and in the first ante-chamber there were only a couple of messengers.

The Minister had experienced, on awaking, the most unpleasant of emotions. The "*Voix du Peuple*," which on the previous day had revived the African Railway scandal, by accusing Barroux of having pocketed 200,000 francs, had that morning published its long-promised list of the bribe-taking senators and deputies. And at the head of this list Monferrand had found his own name set down against a sum of 80,000 francs, while Fonsèque was credited with 50,000. Then a fifth of the latter amount was said to have been Duthil's share, and Chaigneux had contented himself with the beggarly sum of 3,000 francs—the lowest price paid for any one vote, the cost of each of the others ranging from 5 to 20,000.

It must be said that there was no anger in Monferrand's emotion. Only he had never thought that Sagnier would carry his passion for uproar and scandal so far as to publish this list—a page which was said

to have been torn from a memorandum book belonging to Duvillard's agent, Hunter, and which was covered with incomprehensible hieroglyphics that ought to have been discussed and explained, if, indeed, the real truth was to be arrived at. Personally, Monferrand felt quite at ease, for he had written nothing, signed nothing, and knew that one could always extricate oneself from a mess by showing some audacity, and never confessing. Nevertheless, what a commotion it would all cause in the parliamentary duck-pond. He at once realised the inevitable consequences, the ministry overthrown and swept away by this fresh whirlwind of denunciation and tittle-tattle. Mège would renew his interpellation on the morrow, and Vignon and his friends would at once lay siege to the posts they coveted. And he, Monferrand, could picture himself driven out of that ministerial sanctum where, for eight months past, he had been taking his ease, not with any foolish vainglory, but with the pleasure of feeling that he was in his proper place as a born ruler, who believed he could tame and lead the multitude.

Having thrown the newspapers aside with a disdainful gesture, he rose and stretched himself, growling the while like a plagued lion. And then he began to walk up and down the spacious room, which showed all the faded official luxury of mahogany furniture and green damask hangings. Stepping to and fro, with his hands behind his back, he no longer wore his usual fatherly, good-natured air. He appeared as he really was, a born wrestler, short, but broad shouldered, with sensual mouth, fleshy nose and stern eyes,

that all proclaimed him to be unscrupulous, of iron will and fit for the greatest tasks. Still, in this case, in what direction lay his best course? Must he let himself be dragged down with Barroux? Perhaps his personal position was not absolutely compromised? And yet how could he part company from the others, swim ashore, and save himself while they were being drowned? It was a grave problem, and with his frantic desire to retain power, he made desperate endeavours to devise some suitable manœuvre.

But he could think of nothing, and began to swear at the virtuous fits of that silly Republic, which, in his opinion, rendered all government impossible. To think of such foolish fiddle-faddle stopping a man of his acumen and strength! How on earth can one govern men if one is denied the use of money, that sovereign means of sway? And he laughed bitterly; for the idea of an idyllic country where all great enterprises would be carried out in an absolutely honest manner seemed to him the height of absurdity.

At last, however, unable as he was to come to a determination, it occurred to him to confer with Baron Duvillard, whom he had long known, and whom he regretted not having seen sooner so as to urge him to purchase Sagnier's silence. At first he thought of sending the Baron a brief note by a messenger; but he disliked committing anything to paper, for the veriest scrap of writing may prove dangerous; so he preferred to employ the telephone which had been installed for his private use near his writing-table.

"It is Baron Duvillard who is speaking to me? . . . Quite so. It's I, the Minister, Monsieur Monferrand.

I shall be much obliged if you will come to see me at once. . . . Quite so, quite so, I will wait for you."

Then again he walked to and fro and meditated. That fellow Duvillard was as clever a man as himself, and might be able to give him an idea. And he was still laboriously trying to devise some scheme, when the usher entered saying that Monsieur Gascogne, the Chief of the Detective Police, particularly wished to speak to him. Monferrand's first thought was that the Prefecture of Police desired to know his views respecting the steps which ought to be taken to ensure public order that day; for two mid-Lent processions — one of the Washerwomen and the other of the Students — were to march through Paris, whose streets would certainly be crowded.

"Show Monsieur Gascogne in," he said.

A tall, slim, dark man, looking like an artisan in his Sunday best, then stepped into the ministerial sanctum. Fully acquainted with the under-currents of Paris life, this Chief of the Detective Force had a cold dispassionate nature and a clear and methodical mind. Professionalism slightly spoilt him, however: he would have possessed more intelligence if he had not credited himself with so much.

He began by apologising for his superior the Prefect, who would certainly have called in person had he not been suffering from indisposition. However, it was perhaps best that he, Gascogne, should acquaint Monsieur le Ministre with the grave affair which brought him, for he knew every detail of it. Then he revealed what the grave affair was.

"I believe, Monsieur le Ministre, that we at last

hold the perpetrator of the crime in the Rue Godot-de-Mauroy."

At this, Monferrand, who had been listening impatiently, became quite impassioned. The fruitless searches of the police, the attacks and the jeers of the newspapers, were a source of daily worry to him. "Ah! — Well, so much the better for you Monsieur Gascogne," he replied with brutal frankness. "You would have ended by losing your post. The man is arrested?"

"Not yet, Monsieur le Ministre; but he cannot escape, and it is merely an affair of a few hours."

Then the Chief of the Detective Force told the whole story: how Detective Mondésir, on being warned by a secret agent that the Anarchist Salvat was in a tavern at Montmartre, had reached it just as the bird had flown; then how chance had again set him in presence of Salvat at a hundred paces or so from the tavern, the rascal having foolishly loitered there to watch the establishment; and afterwards how Salvat had been stealthily shadowed in the hope that they might catch him in his hiding-place with his accomplices. And, in this wise, he had been tracked to the Porte-Maillot, where, realising, no doubt, that he was pursued, he had suddenly bolted into the Bois de Boulogne. It was there that he had been hiding since two o'clock in the morning in the drizzle which had not ceased to fall. They had waited for daylight in order to organise a *battue* and hunt him down like some animal, whose weariness must necessarily ensure capture. And so, from one moment to another, he would be caught.

"I know the great interest you take in the arrest, Monsieur le Ministre," added Gascogne, "and it occurred to me to ask your orders. Detective Mondésir is over there, directing the hunt. He regrets that he did not apprehend the man on the Boulevard de Rochechouart, but, all the same, the idea of following him was a capital one, and one can only reproach Mondésir with having forgotten the Bois de Boulogne in his calculations."

Salvat arrested! That fellow Salvat whose name had filled the newspapers for three weeks past. This was a most fortunate stroke which would be talked of far and wide! In the depths of Monferrand's fixed eyes one could divine a world of thoughts and a sudden determination to turn this incident which chance had brought him to his own personal advantage. In his own mind a link was already forming between this arrest and that African Railways interpellation which was likely to overthrow the ministry on the morrow. The first outlines of a scheme already rose before him. Was it not his good star that had sent him what he had been seeking—a means of fishing himself out of the troubled waters of the approaching crisis?

"But tell me, Monsieur Gascogne," said he, "are you quite sure that this man Salvat committed the crime?"

"Oh! perfectly sure, Monsieur le Ministre. He'll confess everything in the cab before he reaches the Prefecture."

Monferrand again walked to and fro with a pensive air, and ideas came to him as he spoke on in a slow,

meditative fashion. "My orders! well, my orders, they are, first, that you must act with the very greatest prudence. Yes, don't gather a mob of promenaders together. Try to arrange things so that the arrest may pass unperceived—and if you secure a confession keep it to yourself, don't communicate it to the newspapers. Yes, I particularly recommend that point to you, don't take the newspapers into your confidence at all—and finally, come and tell me everything, and observe secrecy, absolute secrecy, with everybody else."

Gascogne bowed and would have withdrawn, but Monferrand detained him to say that not a day passed without his friend Monsieur Lehmann, the Public Prosecutor, receiving letters from Anarchists who threatened to blow him up with his family; in such wise that, although he was by no means a coward, he wished his house to be guarded by plain-clothes officers. A similar watch was already kept upon the house where investigating magistrate Amadiou resided. And if the latter's life was precious, that of Public Prosecutor Lehmann was equally so, for he was one of those political magistrates, one of those shrewd talented Israelites, who make their way in very honest fashion by invariably taking the part of the Government in office.

Then Gascogne in his turn remarked: "There is also the Barthès affair, Monsieur le Ministre—we are still waiting. Are we to arrest Barthès at that little house at Neuilly?"

One of those chances which sometimes come to the help of detectives and make people think the latter to



be men of genius had revealed to him the circumstance that Barthès had found a refuge with Abbé Pierre Froment. Ever since the Anarchist terror had thrown Paris into dismay a warrant had been out against the old man, not for any precise offence, but simply because he was a suspicious character and might, therefore, have had some intercourse with the Revolutionists. However, it had been repugnant to Gascogne to arrest him at the house of a priest whom the whole district venerated as a saint; and the Minister, whom he had consulted on the point, had warmly approved of his reserve, since a member of the clergy was in question, and had undertaken to settle the affair himself.

"No, Monsieur Gascogne," he now replied, "don't move in the matter. You know what my feelings are, that we ought to have the priests with us and not against us—I have had a letter written to Abbé Froment in order that he may call here this morning, as I shall have no other visitors. I will speak to him myself, and you may take it that the affair no longer concerns you."

Then he was about to dismiss him when the usher came back saying that the President of the Council was in the ante-room.<sup>1</sup>

"Barroux! — Ah! dash it, then, Monsieur Gascogne, you had better go out this way. It is as well that nobody should meet you, as I wish you to keep silent respecting Salvat's arrest. It's fully understood, is it not? I alone am to know everything; and you will

<sup>1</sup> The title of President of the Council is given to the French prime minister. — *Trans.*

communicate with me here direct, by the telephone, if any serious incident should arise."

The Chief of the Detective Police had scarcely gone off, by way of an adjoining *salon*, when the usher reopened the door communicating with the ante-room: "Monsieur le Président du Conseil."

With a nicely adjusted show of deference and cordiality, Monferrand stepped forward, his hands outstretched: "Ah! my dear President, why did you put yourself out to come here? I would have called on you if I had known that you wished to see me."

But with an impatient gesture Barroux brushed aside all question of etiquette. "No, no! I was taking my usual stroll in the Champs Elysées, and the worries of the situation impressed me so keenly that I preferred to come here at once. You yourself must realise that we can't put up with what is taking place. And pending to-morrow morning's council, when we shall have to arrange a plan of defence, I felt that there was good reason for us to talk things over."

He took an armchair, and Monferrand on his side rolled another forward so as to seat himself with his back to the light. Whilst Barroux, the elder of the pair by ten years, blanched and solemn, with a handsome face, snowy whiskers, clean-shaven chin and upper-lip, retained all the dignity of power, the bearing of a *Conventionnel* of romantic views, who sought to magnify the simple loyalty of a rather foolish but good-hearted *bourgeois* nature into something great; the other, beneath his heavy common countenance and feigned frankness and simplicity, concealed unknown depths, the unfathomable soul of a shrewd enjoyer

and despot who was alike pitiless and unscrupulous in attaining his ends.

For a moment Barroux drew breath, for in reality he was greatly moved, his blood rising to his head, and his heart beating with indignation and anger at the thought of all the vulgar insults which the "Voix du Peuple" had poured upon him again that morning. "Come, my dear colleague," said he, "one must stop that scandalous campaign. Moreover, you can realise what awaits us at the Chamber to-morrow. Now that the famous list has been published we shall have every malcontent up in arms. Vignon is bestirring himself already ——"

"Ah! you have news of Vignon?" exclaimed Monferrand, becoming very attentive.

"Well, as I passed his door just now, I saw a string of cabs waiting there. All his creatures have been on the move since yesterday, and at least twenty persons have told me that the band is already dividing the spoils. For, as you must know, the fierce and ingenuous Mège is again going to pull the chestnuts out of the fire for others. Briefly, we are dead, and the others claim that they are going to bury us in mud before they fight over our leavings." With his arm outstretched Barroux made a theatrical gesture, and his voice resounded as if he were in the tribune. Nevertheless, his emotion was real, tears even were coming to his eyes. "To think that I who have given my whole life to the Republic, I who founded it, who saved it, should be covered with insults in this fashion, and obliged to defend myself against abominable charges! To say that I abused my trust! that I sold

myself and took 200,000 francs from that man Hunter, simply to slip them into my pocket! Well, certainly there *was* a question of 200,000 francs between us. But how and under what circumstances? They were doubtless the same as in your case, with regard to the 80,000 francs that he is said to have handed you —— ”

But Monferrand interrupted his colleague in a clear trenchant voice: “He never handed me a centime.”

The other looked at him in astonishment, but could only see his big, rough head, whose features were steeped in shadow: “Ah! But I thought you had business relations with him, and knew him particularly well.”

“No, I simply knew Hunter as everyone knew him. I was not even aware that he was Baron Duvillard’s agent in the African Railways matter; and there was never any question of that affair between us.”

This was so improbable, so contrary to everything Barroux knew of the business, that for a moment he felt quite scared. Then he waved his hand as if to say that others might as well look after their own affairs, and reverted to himself. “Oh! as for me,” he said, “Hunter called on me more than ten times, and made me quite sick with his talk of the African Railways. It was at the time when the Chamber was asked to authorise the issue of lottery stock.<sup>1</sup> And,

<sup>1</sup> This kind of stock is common enough in France. A part of it is extinguished annually at a public “drawing,” when all such shares or bonds that are drawn become entitled to redemption at “par,” a percentage of them also securing prizes of various amounts. City of Paris Bonds issued on this system are very popular among French people with small savings, but, on the other hand, many ventures, whose lottery stock has been authorised by the Legislature, have

by the way, my dear fellow, I was then here at the Home Department, while you had just taken that of Public Works. I can remember sitting at that very writing-table, while Hunter was in the same armchair that I now occupy. That day he wanted to consult me about the employment of the large sum which Duvillard's house proposed to spend in advertising; and on seeing what big amounts were set down against the Royalist journals, I became quite angry, for I realised with perfect accuracy that this money would simply be used to wage war against the Republic. And so, yielding to Hunter's entreaties, I also drew up a list allotting 200,000 francs among the friendly Republican newspapers, which were paid through me, I admit it. And that's the whole story."<sup>1</sup>

Then he sprang to his feet and struck his chest, whilst his voice again rose: "Well, I've had more than enough of all that calumny and falsehood! And I shall simply tell the Chamber my story to-morrow. It will be my only defence. An honest man does not fear the truth!"

But Monferriand, in his turn, had sprung up with a cry which was a complete confession of his principles: "It's ridiculous, one never confesses; you surely won't do such a thing!"

"I shall," retorted Barroux with superb obstinacy. "And we shall see if the Chamber won't absolve me by acclamation."

<sup>1</sup> All who are acquainted with recent French history will be aware that Barroux' narrative is simply a passage from the life of the late M. Floquet, slightly modified to suit the requirements of M. Zola's story. — *Trans.*

"No, you will fall beneath an explosion of hisses, and drag all of us down with you "

"What does it matter ? We shall fall with dignity, like honest men !"

Monferrand made a gesture of furious anger, and then suddenly became calm. Amidst all the anxious confusion in which he had been struggling since day-break, a gleam now dawned upon him. The vague ideas suggested by Salvat's approaching arrest took shape, and expanded into an audacious scheme. Why should he prevent the fall of that big ninny Barroux ? The only thing of importance was that he, Monferrand, should not fall with him, or at any rate that he should rise again. So he protested no further, but merely mumbled a few words, in which his rebellious feeling seemingly died out. And at last, putting on his good-natured air once more, he said : "Well, after all you are perhaps right. One must be brave. Besides, you are our head, my dear President, and we will follow you."

They had now again sat down face to face, and their conversation continued till they came to a cordial agreement respecting the course which the Government should adopt in view of the inevitable interpellation on the morrow.

Meantime, Baron Duvillard was on his way to the ministry. He had scarcely slept that night. When on the return from Montmartre Gérard had set him down at his door in the Rue Godot-de-Mauroy, he had at once gone to bed, like a man who is determined to compel sleep, so that he may forget his worries and recover self-control. But slumber would not come ;

for hours and hours he vainly sought it. The manner in which he had been insulted by that creature Silviane was so monstrous! To think that she, whom he had enriched, whose every desire he had contented, should have cast such mud at him, the master, who flattered himself that he held Paris and the Republic in his hands, since he bought up and controlled consciences just as others might make corners in wool or leather for the purposes of Bourse speculation. And the dim consciousness that Silviane was the avenging sore, the cancer preying on him who preyed on others, completed his exasperation. In vain did he try to drive away his haunting thoughts, remember his business affairs, his appointments for the morrow, his millions which were working in every quarter of the world, the financial omnipotence which placed the fate of nations in his grasp. Ever, and in spite of all, Silviane rose up before him, splashing him with mud. In despair he tried to fix his mind on a great enterprise which he had been planning for months past, a Trans-Saharan railway, a colossal venture which would set millions of money at work, and revolutionise the trade of the world. And yet Silviane appeared once more, and smacked him on both cheeks with her dainty little hand, which she had dipped in the gutter. It was only towards daybreak that he at last dozed off, while vowing in a fury that he would never see her again, that he would spurn her, and order her away, even should she come and drag herself at his feet.

However, when he awoke at seven, still tired and aching, his first thought was for her, and he almost

yielded to a fit of weakness. The idea came to him to ascertain if she had returned home, and if so make his peace. But he jumped out of bed, and after his ablutions he recovered all his bravery. She was a wretch, and he this time thought himself for ever cured of his passion. To tell the truth, he forgot it as soon as he opened the morning newspapers. The publication of the list of bribe-takers in the "*Voix du Peuple*" quite upset him, for he had hitherto thought it unlikely that Sagnier held any such list. However, he judged the document at a glance, at once separating the few truths it contained from a mass of foolishness and falsehood. And this time also he did not consider himself personally in danger. There was only one thing that he really feared: the arrest of his intermediary, Hunter, whose trial might have drawn him into the affair. As matters stood, and as he did not cease to repeat with a calm and smiling air, he had merely done what every banking-house does when it issues stock, that is, pay the press for advertisements and puffery, employ brokers, and reward services discreetly rendered to the enterprise. It was all a business matter, and for him that expression summed up everything. Moreover, he played the game of life bravely, and spoke with indignant contempt of a banker who, distracted and driven to extremities by blackmailing, had imagined that he would bring a recent scandal to an end by killing himself: a pitiful tragedy, from all the mire and blood of which the scandal had sprouted afresh with the most luxuriant and indestructible vegetation. No, no! suicide was not the course to follow a man ought to remain erect,



and struggle on to his very last copper, and the very end of his energy.

At about nine o'clock a ringing brought Duvillard to the telephone installed in his private room. And then his folly took possession of him once more: it must be Silviane who wished to speak to him. She often amused herself by thus disturbing him amidst his greatest cares. No doubt she had just returned home, realising that she had carried things too far on the previous evening and desiring to be forgiven. However, when he found that the call was from Monferrand, who wished him to go to the ministry, he shivered slightly, like a man saved from the abyss beside which he is travelling. And forthwith he called for his hat and stick, desirous as he was of walking and reflecting in the open air. And again he became absorbed in the intricacies of the scandalous business which was about to stir all Paris and the legislature. Kill himself! ah, no, that would be foolish and cowardly. A gust of terror might be sweeping past; nevertheless, for his part he felt quite firm, superior to events, and resolved to defend himself without relinquishing aught of his power.

As soon as he entered the ante-rooms of the ministry he realised that the gust of terror was becoming a tempest. The publication of the terrible list in the "*Voix du Peuple*" had chilled the guilty ones to the heart; and, pale and distracted, feeling the ground give way beneath them, they had come to take counsel of Monferrand, who, they hoped, might save them. The first whom Duvillard perceived was Duthil, looking extremely feverish, biting his moustaches, and

constantly making grimaces in his efforts to force a smile. The banker scolded him for coming, saying that it was a great mistake to have done so, particularly with such a scared face. The deputy, however, his spirits already cheered by these rough words, began to defend himself, declaring that he had not even read Sagnier's article, and had simply come to recommend a lady friend to the Minister. Thereupon the Baron undertook this business for him and sent him away with the wish that he might spend a merry mid-Lent. However, the one who most roused Duvillard's pity was Chaigneux, whose figure swayed about as if bent by the weight of his long equine head, and who looked so shabby and untidy that one might have taken him for an old pauper. On recognising the banker he darted forward, and bowed to him with obsequious eagerness.

"Ah! Monsieur le Baron," said he, "how wicked some men must be! They are killing me, I shall die of it all; and what will become of my wife, what will become of my three daughters, who have none but me to help them?"

The whole of his woful story lay in that lament. A victim of politics, he had been foolish enough to quit Arras and his business there as a solicitor, in order to seek triumph in Paris with his wife and daughters, whose menial he had then become—a menial dismayed by the constant rebuffs and failures which his mediocrity brought upon him. An honest deputy! ah, good heavens! yes, he would have liked to be one; but was he not perpetually "hard-up," ever in search of a hundred-franc note, and thus, per-

force, a deputy for sale? And withal he led such a pitiable life, so badgered by the women folk about him, that to satisfy their demands he would have picked up money no matter where or how.

"Just fancy, Monsieur le Baron, I have at last found a husband for my eldest girl. It is the first bit of luck that I have ever had; there will only be three women left on my hands if it comes off. But you can imagine what a disastrous impression such an article as that of this morning must create in the young man's family. So I have come to see the Minister to beg him to give my future son-in-law a prefectoral secretaryship. I have already promised him the post, and if I can secure it things may yet be arranged."

He looked so terribly shabby and spoke in such a doleful voice that it occurred to Duvillard to do one of those good actions on which he ventured at times when they were likely to prove remunerative investments. It is, indeed, an excellent plan to give a crust of bread to some poor devil whom one can turn, if necessary, into a valet or an accomplice. So the banker dismissed Chaigneux, undertaking to do his business for him in the same way as he had undertaken to do Duthil's. And he added that he would be pleased to see him on the morrow, and have a chat with him, as he might be able to help him in the matter of his daughter's marriage.

At this Chaigneux, scenting a loan, collapsed into the most lavish thanks. "Ah! Monsieur le Baron, my life will not be long enough to enable me to repay such a debt of gratitude."

As Duvillard turned round he was surprised to see

Abbé Froment waiting in a corner of the ante-room. Surely that one could not belong to the batch of *suspects*, although by the manner in which he was pretending to read a newspaper it seemed as if he were trying to hide some keen anxiety. At last the Baron stepped forward, shook hands, and spoke to him cordially. And Pierre thereupon related that he had received a letter requesting him to call on the Minister that day. Why, he could not tell; in fact, he was greatly surprised, he said, putting on a smile in order to conceal his disquietude. He had been waiting a long time already, and hoped that he would not be forgotten on that bench.

Just then the usher appeared, and hastened up to the banker. "The Minister," said he, "was at that moment engaged with the President of the Council; but he had orders to admit the Baron as soon as the President withdrew." Almost immediately afterwards Barroux came out, and as Duvillard was about to enter he recognised and detained him. And he spoke of the denunciations very bitterly, like one indignant with all the slander. Would not he, Duvillard, should occasion require it, testify that he, Barroux, had never taken a centime for himself? Then, forgetting that he was speaking to a banker, and that he was Minister of Finances, he proceeded to express all his disgust of money. Ah! what poisonous, murky, and defiling waters were those in which money-making went on! However, he repeated that he would chastise his insulters, and that a statement of the truth would suffice for the purpose.

Duvillard listened and looked at him. And all at

once the thought of Silviane came back, and took possession of the Baron, without any attempt on his part to drive it away. He reflected that if Barroux had chosen to give him a helping hand when he had asked for it, Silviane would now have been at the Comédie Française, in which case the deplorable affair of the previous night would not have occurred; for he was beginning to regard himself as guilty in the matter; if he had only contented Silviane's whim she would never have dismissed him in so vile a fashion.

"You know, I owe you a grudge," he said, interrupting Barroux.

The other looked at him in astonishment. "And why, pray?" he asked.

"Why, because you never helped me in the matter of that friend of mine who wishes to make her *début* in 'Polyeucte.'"

Barroux smiled, and with amiable condescension replied: "Ah! yes, Silviane d'Aulnay! But, my dear sir, it was Taboureau who put spokes in the wheel. The Fine Arts are his department, and the question was entirely one for him. And I could do nothing; for that very worthy and honest gentleman, who came to us from a provincial faculty, was full of scruples. For my own part I'm an old Parisian, I can understand anything, and I should have been delighted to please you."

At this fresh resistance offered to his passion Duvillard once more became excited, eager to obtain that which was denied him. "Taboureau, Taboureau!" said he, "he's a nice deadweight for you to load yourself with! Honest! isn't everybody honest?"

Come, my dear Minister, there's still time, get Silviane admitted, it will bring you good luck for to-morrow."

This time Barroux burst into a frank laugh: "No, no, I can't cast Taboureau adrift at this moment — people would make too much sport of it — a ministry wrecked or saved by a Silviane question!"

Then he offered his hand before going off. The Baron pressed it, and for a moment retained it in his own, whilst saying very gravely and with a somewhat pale face: "You do wrong to laugh, my dear Minister. Governments have fallen or set themselves erect again through smaller matters than that. And should you fall to-morrow I trust that you will never have occasion to regret it."

Wounded to the heart by the other's jesting air, exasperated by the idea that there was something he could not achieve, Duvillard watched Barroux as he withdrew. Most certainly the Baron did not desire a reconciliation with Silviane, but he vowed that he would overturn everything if necessary in order to send her a signed engagement for the Comédie, and this simply by way of vengeance, as a slap, so to say, — yes, a slap which would make her tingle! That moment spent with Barroux had been a decisive one.

However, whilst still following Barroux with his eyes, Duvillard was surprised to see Fonsègue arrive and manœuvre in such a way as to escape the Prime Minister's notice. He succeeded in doing so, and then entered the ante-room with an appearance of dismay about the whole of his little figure, which was,

as a rule, so sprightly. It was the gust of terror, still blowing, that had brought him thither.

"Didn't you see your friend Barroux?" the Baron asked him, somewhat puzzled.

"Barroux? No!"

This quiet lie was equivalent to a confession of everything. Fonsègue was so intimate with Barroux that he thee'd and thou'd him, and for ten years had been supporting him in his newspaper, having precisely the same views, the same political religion. But with a smash-up threatening, he doubtless realised, thanks to his wonderfully keen scent, that he must change his friendships if he did not wish to remain under the ruins himself. If he had, for long years, shown so much prudence and diplomatic virtue in order to firmly establish the most dignified and respected of Parisian newspapers, it was not for the purpose of letting that newspaper be compromised by some foolish blunder on the part of an honest man.

"I thought you were on bad terms with Monferrand," resumed Duvillard. "What have you come here for?"

"Oh! my dear Baron, the director of a leading newspaper is never on bad terms with anybody. He's at the country's service."

In spite of his emotion, Duvillard could not help smiling. "You are right," he responded. "Besides, Monferrand is really an able man, whom one can support without fear."

At this Fonsègue began to wonder whether his anguish of mind was visible. He, who usually played the game of life so well, with his own hand under

thorough control, had been terrified by the article in the "*Voix du Peuple*." For the first time in his career he had perpetrated a blunder, and felt that he was at the mercy of some denunciation, for with unpardonable imprudence he had written a very brief but compromising note. He was not anxious concerning the 50,000 francs which Barroux had handed him out of the 200,000 destined for the Republican press. But he trembled lest another affair should be discovered, that of a sum of money which he had received as a present. It was only on feeling the Baron's keen glance upon him that he was able to recover some self-possession. How silly it was to lose the knack of lying and to confess things simply by one's demeanour!

But the usher drew near and repeated that the Minister was now waiting for the Baron; and Fonsègue went to sit down beside Abbé Froment, whom he also was astonished to find there. Pierre repeated that he had received a letter, but had no notion what the Minister might wish to say to him. And the quiver of his hands again revealed how feverishly impatient he was to know what it might be. However, he could only wait, since Monferrand was still busy discussing such grave affairs.

On seeing Duvillard enter, the Minister had stepped forward, offering his hand. However much the blast of terror might shake others, he had retained his calmness and good-natured smile. "What an affair, eh, my dear Baron!" he exclaimed.

"It's idiotic!" plainly declared the other, with a shrug of his shoulders. Then he sat down in the armchair vacated by Barroux, while the Minister



installed himself in front of him. These two were made to understand one another, and they indulged in the same despairing gestures and furious complaints, declaring that government, like business, would no longer be possible if men were required to show such virtue as they did not possess. At all times, and under every *régime*, when a decision of the Chambers had been required in connection with some great enterprise, had not the natural and legitimate tactics been for one to do what might be needful to secure that decision? It was absolutely necessary that one should obtain influential and sympathetic support, in a word, make sure of votes. Well, everything had to be paid for, men like other things, some with fine words, others with favours or money, presents made in a more or less disguised manner. And even admitting that, in the present cases, one had gone rather far in the purchasing, that some of the bartering had been conducted in an imprudent way, was it wise to make such an uproar over it? Would not a strong government have begun by stifling the scandal, from motives of patriotism, a mere sense of cleanliness even?

"Why, of course! You are right, a thousand times right!" exclaimed Monferrand. "Ah! if I were the master you would see what a fine first-class funeral I would give it all!" Then, as Duvillard looked at him fixedly, struck by these last words, he added with his expressive smile: "Unfortunately I'm not the master, and it was to talk to you of the situation that I ventured to disturb you. Barroux, who was here just now, seemed to me in a regrettable frame of mind."

"Yes, I saw him, he has such singular ideas at times ——" Then, breaking off, the Baron added "Do you know that Fonsègue is in the ante-room? As he wishes to make his peace with you, why not send for him? He won't be in the way, in fact, he's a man of good counsel, and the support of his newspaper often suffices to give one the victory."

"What, is Fonsègue there!" cried Monferrand. "Why, I don't ask better than to shake hands with him. There were some old affairs between us that don't concern anybody! But, good heavens! if you only knew what little spite I harbour!"

When the usher had admitted Fonsègue the reconciliation took place in the simplest fashion. They had been great friends at college in their native Corrèze, but had not spoken together for ten years past in consequence of some abominable affair the particulars of which were not exactly known. However, it becomes necessary to clear away all corpses when one wishes to have the arena free for a fresh battle.

"It's very good of you to come back the first," said Monferrand. "So it's all over, you no longer bear me any grudge?"

"No, indeed!" replied Fonsègue. "Why should people devour one another when it would be to their interest to come to an understanding?"

Then, without further explanations, they passed to the great affair, and the conference began. And when Monferrand had announced Barroux' determination to confess and explain his conduct, the others loudly protested. That meant certain downfall, they would

prevent him, he surely would not be guilty of such folly. Forthwith they discussed every imaginable plan by which the Ministry might be saved, for that must certainly be Monferrand's sole desire. He himself with all eagerness pretended to seek some means of extricating his colleagues and himself from the mess in which they were. However, a faint smile still played around his lips, and at last as if vanquished he sought no further. "There's no help for it," said he, "the ministry's down."

The others exchanged glances, full of anxiety at the thought of another Cabinet dealing with the African Railways affair. A Vignon Cabinet would doubtless plume itself on behaving honestly.

"Well, then, what shall we do?"

But just then the telephone rang, and Monferrand rose to respond to the summons: "Allow me."

He listened for a moment and then spoke into the tube, nothing that he said giving the others any inkling of the information which had reached him. This had come from the Chief of the Detective Police, and was to the effect that Salvat's whereabouts in the Bois de Boulogne had been discovered, and that he would be hunted down with all speed. "Very good! And don't forget my orders," replied Monferrand.

Now that Salvat's arrest was certain, the Minister determined to follow the plan which had gradually taken shape in his mind; and returning to the middle of the room he slowly walked to and fro, while saying with his wonted familiarity: "But what would you have, my friends? It would be necessary for me to be the master. Ah! if I were the master! A Com-

mission of Inquiry, yes! that's the proper form for a first-class funeral to take in a big affair like this, so full of nasty things. For my part, I should confess nothing, and I should have a Commission appointed. And then you would see the storm subside."

Duvillard and Fonsègue began to laugh. The latter, however, thanks to his intimate knowledge of Monferrand, almost guessed the truth. "Just listen!" said he, "even if the ministry falls it doesn't necessarily follow that you must be on the ground with it. Besides, a ministry can be mended when there are good pieces of it left."

Somewhat anxious at finding his thoughts guessed, Monferrand protested: "No, no, my dear fellow, I don't play that game. We are jointly responsible, we've got to keep together, dash it all!"

"Keep together! Pooh! Not when simpletons purposely drown themselves! And, besides, if we others have need of you, we have a right to save you in spite of yourself! Isn't that so, my dear Baron?"

Then, as Monferrand sat down, no longer protesting but waiting, Duvillard, who was again thinking of his passion, full of anger at the recollection of Barroux' refusal, rose in his turn, and exclaimed: "Why, certainly! If the ministry's condemned let it fall! What good can you get out of a ministry which includes such a man as Taboureau! There you have an old, worn-out professor without any prestige, who comes to Paris from Grenoble, and has never set foot in a theatre in his life! Yet the control of the theatres is handed over to him, and naturally he's ever doing the most stupid things!"

Monferrand, who was well informed on the Silviane question, remained grave, and for a moment amused himself by trying to excite the Baron. "Taboureau," said he, "is a somewhat dull and old-fashioned University man, but at the department of Public Instruction he's in his proper element."

"Oh! don't talk like that, my dear fellow! You are more intelligent than that, you are not going to defend Taboureau as Barroux did. It's quite true that I should very much like to see Silviane at the Comédie. She's a very good girl at heart, and she has an amazing lot of talent. Would you stand in her way if you were in Taboureau's place?"

"I? Good heavens, no! A pretty girl on the stage, why, it would please everybody, I'm sure. Only it would be necessary to have a man of the same views as were at the department of Instruction and Fine Arts."

His sly smile had returned to his face. The securing of that girl's *début* was certainly not a high price to pay for all the influence of Duvillard's millions. Monferrand therefore turned towards Fonsègue as if to consult him. The other, who fully understood the importance of the affair, was meditating in all seriousness: "A senator is the proper man for Public Instruction," said he. "But I can think of none, none at all, such as would be wanted. A man of broad mind, a real Parisian, and yet one whose presence at the head of the University wouldn't cause too much astonishment — there's perhaps Dauvergne —"

"Dauvergne! Who's he?" exclaimed Monferrand

in surprise. "Ah! yes, Dauvergne the senator for Dijon—but he's altogether ignorant of University matters, he hasn't the slightest qualification."

"Well, as for that," resumed Fonsègue, "I'm trying to think. Dauvergne is certainly a good-looking fellow, tall and fair and decorative. Besides, he's immensely rich, has a most charming young wife—which does no harm, on the contrary—and he gives real *fêtes* at his place on the Boulevard St. German."

It was only with hesitation that Fonsègue himself had ventured to suggest Dauvergne. But by degrees his selection appeared to him a real "find." "Wait a bit! I recollect now that in his young days Dauvergne wrote a comedy, a one act comedy in verse, and had it performed at Dijon. And Dijon's a literary town, you know, so that piece of his sets a little perfume of 'Belles-Lettres' around him. And then, too, he left Dijon twenty years ago, and is a most determined Parisian, frequenting every sphere of society. Dauvergne will do whatever one desires. He's the man for us, I tell you."

Duvillard thereupon declared that he knew him, and considered him a very decent fellow. Besides, he or another, it mattered nothing!

"Dauvergne, Dauvergne," repeated Monferrand. "*Mon Dieu*, yes! After all, why not? He'll perhaps make a very good minister. Let us say Dauvergne." Then suddenly bursting into a hearty laugh: "And so we are reconstructing the Cabinet in order that that charming young woman may join the Comédie! The Silviane cabinet—well, and what about the other departments?"

He jested, well knowing that gaiety often hastens difficult solutions. And, indeed, they merrily continued settling what should be done if the ministry were defeated on the morrow. Although they had not plainly said so the plan was to let Barroux sink, even help him to do so, and then fish Monferrand out of the troubled waters. The latter engaged himself with the two others, because he had need of them, the Baron on account of his financial sovereignty, and the director of "Le Globe" on account of the press campaign which he could carry on in his favour. And in the same way the others, quite apart from the Silviane business, had need of Monferrand, the strong-handed man of government, who undertook to bury the African Railways scandal by bringing about a Commission of Inquiry, all the strings of which would be pulled by himself. There was soon a perfect understanding between the three men, for nothing draws people more closely together than common interest, fear and need. Accordingly, when Duvillard spoke of Duthil's business, the young lady whom he wished to recommend, the Minister declared that it was settled. A very nice fellow was Duthil, they needed a good many like him. And it was also agreed that Chaigneux' future son-in-law should have his secretaryship. Poor Chaigneux! He was so devoted, always ready to undertake any commission, and his four women folk led him such a hard life!

"Well, then, it's understood." And Monferrand, Duvillard and Fonsègue vigorously shook hands.

However, when the first accompanied the others to the door, he noticed a prelate, in a cassock of fine

material, edged with violet, speaking to a priest in the ante-room. Thereupon he, the Minister, hastened forward, looking much distressed. "Ah! you were waiting, Monseigneur Martha! Come in, come in quick!"

But with perfect urbanity the Bishop refused. "No, no, Monsieur l'Abbé Froment was here before me. Pray receive him first."

Monferrand had to give way; he admitted the priest, and speedily dealt with him. He who usually employed the most diplomatic reserve when he was in presence of a member of the clergy plumply unfolded the Barthès business. Pierre had experienced the keenest anguish during the two hours that he had been waiting there, for he could only explain the letter he had received by a surmise that the police had discovered his brother's presence in his house. And so when he heard the Minister simply speak of Barthès, and declare that the government would rather see him go into exile than be obliged to imprison him once more, he remained for a moment quite disconcerted. As the police had been able to discover the old conspirator in the little house at Neuilly, how was it that they seemed altogether ignorant of Guillaume's presence there? It was, however, the usual gap in the genius of great detectives.

"Pray what do you desire of me, Monsieur le Ministre?" said Pierre at last; "I don't quite understand."

"Why, Monsieur l'Abbé, I leave all this to your sense of prudence. If that man were still at your house in forty-eight hours from now, we should be obliged to arrest him there, which would be a source



of grief to us, for we are aware that your residence is the abode of every virtue. So advise him to leave France. If he does that we shall not trouble him."

Then Monferrand hastily brought Pierre back to the ante-room; and, smiling and bending low, he said: "Monseigneur, I am entirely at your disposal. Come in, come in, I beg you."

The prelate, who was gaily chatting with Duvillard and Fonsègue, shook hands with them, and then with Pierre. In his desire to win all hearts, he that morning displayed the most perfect graciousness. His bright, black eyes were all smiles, the whole of his handsome face wore a caressing expression, and he entered the ministerial sanctum leisurely and gracefully, with an easy air of conquest.

And now only Monferrand and Monseigneur Martha were left, talking on and on in the deserted building. Some people had thought that the prelate wished to become a deputy. But he played a far more useful and lofty part in governing behind the scenes, in acting as the directing mind of the Vatican's policy in France. Was not France still the Eldest Daughter of the Church, the only great nation which might some day restore omnipotence to the Papacy? For that reason he had accepted the Republic, preached the duty of "rallying" to it, and inspired the new Catholic group in the Chamber. And Monferrand, on his side, struck by the progress of the New Spirit, that reaction of mysticism which flattered itself that it would bury science, showed the prelate much amiability, like a strong-handed man who, to ensure his own victory, utilised every force that was offered him.













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